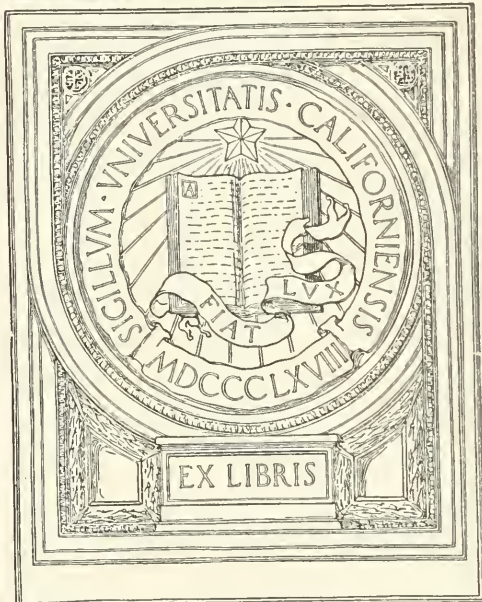




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THE  
BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION



THE  
BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION

An Essay

BY

THOMAS SCOTT BACON

AUTHOR OF 'THE REIGN OF GOD—NOT "THE REIGN OF LAW,"' ETC.

'In the Beginning was the Word.'

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## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book is simply 'An Essay,' to state what, upon the whole, according to facts and true reasonings, we ought to think of the beginning and course of Religion among mankind, and the substantial truth of it now. I know very well that such a history within five hundred pages or so must be very much less full than those who have time enough for a complete investigation may well wish to have. But then there are many others who might like to read as much as this, but be discouraged and kept from it entirely by a large book. And there are very many more yet who *ought* to take as much pains to inform themselves, and perhaps may when it is offered within small compass.

Yet, on account of this abbreviation, the author may be accused, by some who are displeased at his statements, of ignorance, bigotry, and presumption. It is a severe self-denial thus to give often only the *results* of such study and thought, instead of a fuller account, which would fortify him in advance against attacks which may be made by those who may accuse him of bold assertions of what has no truth, and of mere denial of what others have proved. And since his very purpose has been throughout to leave no

important part of the subject not explored, and carefully considered as to different opinions which are put forth by eminent writers, it would be a great pleasure to set forth now and fully his own process in this, as well as the result.

But then, having effected his main purpose, as already indicated, for the benefit of the many who are confused and misled by confident and contemptuous assertions of what they have no opportunity of investigating for themselves, he will be very glad if the opportunity offers to argue fully with any objectors, and to admit with prompt candour any errors which may be shown.

He has therefore endeavoured to read with attention and fairness all that professes to set forth the facts upon which that just judgment should be founded—all the traditions and records of the earlier history; all the later researches and discoveries; above all, not to misapprehend, much less misrepresent, the later writers, whose opinions are now generally received by reading people, but who, he believes, are in this mistaken, and so the cause of error in others.

Yet he freely and with humility acknowledges that he is far from being an original investigator in all these things, or from having been able to read all about them that is worth reading. Indeed, in our time this reading (and study) is an immense affair, which no man's whole time or intelligence can fully compass. If it could, he would read to very little effective use. His memory would fail, or become a

vast lumber-room of particulars, without order, in which he himself could find nothing without difficulty, much less make it of any use to others. There must be 'specialists' now in study.

At the same time it is the right of all intelligent readers—especially in a matter concerning each of us alike, as Religion does—to form *some* judgment of *their own* upon what these special scholars tell them. Each of these last cannot reasonably say to every one else, 'You have no right to differ from me, for you are not a special student of this matter; you have simply to believe all I tell you of it.'

On the contrary, he does good service to all the rest of us who takes the pains to explain the various dicta of various specialists, and to show what the general reader may fairly decide as to the chief facts. This is the more important from the tendency of the special student to exaggerate the importance of his department, and to disallow another order of facts which he fancies to be against his results. One thing is safe for each of us. If he cannot search out the processes of the specialist and enthusiast in some one direction, he can take the *results* of the latter, as he *himself gives* them, and show their bearing and value as to other facts.

The writer is not aware of there being any other book of our time which takes due notice of the researches and discoveries of our own century in these matters, and *also* allows enough to the learning of the past; or traverses *all* the ground of this question, as is here attempted. The principal instance of this

omission is that all these writers who are now generally allowed the greatest authority, both as to research and reasoning, assume as self-evident that mankind *began* to be religious at all, to have thoughts of Divine persons, and to practise worship of them—began this by their own reflections, discoveries, and inventions. This seems taken for granted by all, whether the further argument is that this invention of religion was the instinct of every human soul, all moving together to evolve an actual religion in each people; or the deep meditation of one or of several such more intellectual men, afterwards influencing the rest.

It seems to be altogether forgotten (or only mentioned as one of the amusing follies of the bigotry of the dark ages)<sup>1</sup> that there is another ‘theory,’ if we will so denominate it, which deserves careful attention, which cannot wisely be passed by unnoticed by any who are in search of real truth. This is, that from the very first mankind received the suggestion and information of true religion immediately from God, the Creator, as much as the child now religiously educated does from his elders around him.

In this case Religion must have begun at once with purity and perfection. In the other it was a very slow growth from the feeblest and scarcely noticeable first movement. Upon the former supposition all that is false in any actual religion is subsequent perversion;

<sup>1</sup> So Prof. M. Müller deals with it. Mr. Baring-Gould (*Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, i. 61) refutes (!) it (as he thinks) in a page mainly upon the ‘testimony’ of a French gentleman of our century. We shall see that the grounds for believing it are quite beyond such refutation.

all that is true is a remnant of the Divine beginning. In the other, Religion is supposed (at least by those who have a consistent theory) to be always a progressive evolution of what is true (and elimination of what is false). Then whatever is later in time is truer in fact. All is subject to the intelligence and invention of men. This age is wiser than any before it. A future age will smile at the imperfect religion of our day, and only guess and wonder what will be the still better religion of the future.

For myself, I became, upon reflection, entirely convinced that the second 'theory' mentioned deserved more attention than it has of late received. If there is anything in it at all worth notice it ought to be thoroughly and vigorously tested by all the facts. Indeed, if true, it is that very master-key to all the puzzles of 'Comparative Religion,' which candid investigators must desire above all things. If not true, let that now appear, and then let it be dismissed from attention.

That it is not so absurd as to deserve no attention is plain from the following quotation out of the writings of one whom all agree to have been among the most wise, fair-minded, and deep-thinking of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

'It is evident, then, that there can be no peculiar presumption, from the analogy of nature, against supposing a revelation, when man was first placed upon the earth. And, that there does not appear the least intimation in history or tradition that Religion was

<sup>1</sup> Butler's *Analogy*, Pt. II. chap. ii. p. 214; Bohn's edition.

first reasoned out; but the whole of history and tradition makes for the other side—that it came into the world by revelation. Indeed, the state of Religion in the first ages of which we have any account, seems to suppose and imply, that this was the original of it among mankind. And these reflections together, without taking in the peculiar authority of Scripture, amount to real and a very material degree of evidence that there was a revelation at the beginning of the world.'

I venture to suggest that the inattention to this now prevailing has come, at least in part, from the very strange mistake of those great men—even Butler himself—who thus once affirmed it, in mentioning it as probable truth, and then entirely omitting it from all their subsequent reasoning; whereas, if truth, it was truth of the first magnitude, and of essential urgency to the very argument they had in hand. I conjecture that this mistake arose from the misleading prejudice against truth as given to mere faith, which all philosophy works even in the most intellectual Christians.

I must also mention now what will be fully shown hereafter (see Chap. V. p. 101, etc.) that the central point of such a primitive religion must have been the law of love to God and man, as distinctly given then as it was afterwards renewed by our Lord. Perhaps the utter failure to notice this by the writers I have referred to is the reason why they have made so little of that revelation. In any case I fully accept the issue that this is the vital point of my own contention, and which cannot be sustained if this not maintained.



Professor M. Müller merely mentions the 'theory' of primitive revelation to show what follies were once accepted by all Christian writers, and not as being worth his refuting—classing it with the notion of Hebrew being the original language of mankind, the 'Ptolemaic system,' etc. But is it not worth *our* consideration that, besides so many others of the wisest students of Divine things, one of the most profound, original, and exact thinkers a century ago declares that there is 'real and a very material degree of evidence' for it?

I am unable to see why what Butler speaks of in this way is unworthy of the serious consideration of any one in this generation. Is it because the former knew nothing of the Sanscrit language, and some in our day do know enough of it to confound the rest of us? Grant all that is claimed in reason for that learning (and we are certainly unable to prove the contrary, any more than as if the only survivor of an expedition into the interior of Papua should discourse of the value of its literary remains), does it follow that what the older scholars concluded from the stones of Greek, Roman, and Hebrew monuments, and from the (if you will) supposed superior and certain communications of God Himself to all mankind, is of no weight with truth-loving people now? While I am also trying to see without prejudice what the earlier language and ancient writings of the Hindus can add to our former knowledge of these matters, I cannot so think. It seems to me, indeed, a very unwholesome

state of mind which takes no notice of the great inferiority, as a whole, of the Sanscrit to the Hebrew writings; of the prodigious quantity of the chaff of silly superstition and childish trifling in which the few grains of thought are to be found in the former; while the latter (I speak only of Holy Scripture), if sometimes obscure, never lose the respect of the reader. For the former, certainly Professor Müller's translations are a fair test, both in the selection of the best specimens, and in their rendering into English (of which he is, as we *can* all see, an admirable master) for those who can only know them in that language.

I am not without hope that this book may also be of some use to students of the Holy Scriptures, especially preachers and other expositors, showing, from a point of view which is not common, the depth of meaning there is in some passages, which might otherwise escape attention. If it did no more than this, the author would be well repaid for his work. It is one of the noblest uses of study to help others in a right apprehension of anything in the Book of books. For this purpose a careful index of such references is appended.

Finally, if it seem to any a departure from the impartial exactness of history that the writer speaks at times with such positiveness and ardour of conviction, this is not at all from negligence, but of purpose. There is nothing he has so much endea-

voured in at all as entire truthfulness ; but his own most well-considered judgment is that he would have sacrificed, and not promoted, truth by an attempt to be coldly impartial as between what God has revealed to men, and the mere achievement of their minds. In that case man is invariably most unfair to the Divine, and most unjust to himself and his fellow-men. Such pretended impartiality is a morbid perversion of the love of truth, which frustrates its professed object. For my own part, if as regards this I were now to make my choice between the unanimous applause of my fellow-men for that sort of 'impartial' genius for history and their condemnation and contempt, as failing in this from religious prejudice, my prompt and cheerful choice would be the latter.



## CHAPTER I.

RELIGION IN HISTORY: AN ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW IT UP FROM THE  
TIMES OF AUGUSTUS CÆSAR TO ITS BEGINNING.

THE Religion of mankind, as a fact of history and of our own time, includes many 'religions.' Whether there is anything common to all these which makes it right to use the one term or not, it is a most interesting question how they all in fact began. To say nothing of this being a matter of incessant concern to each one of us, it is allowed on all hands in our age to be one of the most curious intellectual problems as to what the different nations and races mean or have meant by their 'religions.'

What do *we* mean by Religion? Is it not obscuring the matter, not to say mere pedantry,<sup>1</sup> to go to Latin etymology to fix the meaning of what began a thousand years before this Latin word was spoken, and of which certainly the old Romans are not the most instructive authorities? In the present inquiry Religion means that, besides what men have to do with their fellow-men, they have a belief in another person or persons, whom they think to be superior to their kind, and to have some power over them, to whom they do acts of worship or obedience. Of these, whether really existing or not, they know nothing directly by their bodily senses, as they do of men, but by 'faith' or thought.

In tracing the beginnings of this in history backwards to its sources, if possible, we do not need to start from the present. We can spare much labour by commencing with what, by all consent, is a great fixed point. Our very calendars and dates, in effect, witness continually that less than 1900 years ago a purer religion than prevailed anywhere else

<sup>1</sup> Of course I refer to such resolving it, as one sometimes reads, by deriving *religio* from *re-ligare*, etc. etc.

began, and has since spread and prevailed in Europe and America. But this religion also recognised a certain other religion, which had been practised before it as a true one until then, but to be thenceforth superseded by itself as the only truth for all mankind. Whatever we may judge as to this and related questions at the end of the present inquiry, this is plainly the best point at which to begin that inquiry.

We have as our material in tracing back the religions of men, first the Hebrew history already mentioned, connected with the Christian religion, and, like that, involving the belief of One Personal Creator and Eternal God. Secondly, the Greek and Roman history, and traditions as to their religion, made up as that was of polytheism and mythology and idolatry, or image-worship. Thirdly, the Egyptian history, if it can be called so, of monuments and inscriptions, telling of a polytheism and idolatry if possible more absurd than that of the Greeks. Fourthly, fragments of history in the Assyrian regions of various national religions, mainly idolatrous, but in some instances rejecting the notion of a multitude of gods; yet either worshipping the sun, moon, and planets, or the great forces of heat and light; or having two spiritual gods to divide their *latria* between—one the Supreme Good, the other the Supreme Evil. Fifth, Hindu history. Strictly speaking, there is no connected and traceable history of India so early as this. We have some very ancient and interesting writings, but of uncertain date. This prevents our connecting them by any clue of chronology with any real history in this inquiry. They are a mass of precept, philosophy, and fable, which a living priesthood now claims to interpret by an oral tradition that gives no reasonable guarantee of correctness. This is also confused by the rivalry amongst them of two opposing religions: one an older idolatry and polytheism; the other a later schism from this, professing to be a great spiritual and moral reformation. At this day there seems no notable excellence of one of them over the other (see a comparison of them in detail, Chap. XXI.). Sixth, Chinese religion, so far as it is historical, is either Buddhist, following the later of the two Hindu religions just mentioned, or another sort of gross idolatry, or is that of the famous Confucius, who (somewhat like

Comte, the Frenchman of our generation) seems to have believed in nothing spiritual or eternal, only in what men can do now in this world of their senses to make themselves comfortable. Nor is there any connected Chinese history of this period to assist us in our present inquiry.

Seventh, and finally, it is only by some few fragments, reports, or researches of modern travellers, that we know a little of the traditions of religion among the wild tribes of Asia, Africa, America, and the Ocean Islands.

It seems very plain that we shall have to make our first search in the first three or four of these. To be sure this is not the method most in vogue now. But it seems strangely—strangely against common sense—that in tracing back from the advent of Our Lord the various clues of history as to the origin of religious thought among men, it has of late seemed the fashion of scholars to pass by the definite, clear, and trusty thread (at least in comparison of any others we have) of the Hebrew writings, and go, *e.g.* to those of the Hindus, which are their opposites in each of these conditions of value. If some absurd notion of honour (how can any real sense of honour ever require deviation from truth?) forbid the Christian (?) investigator to begin with what is so close to his own religious prepossessions, why not take up first the Greek and Roman history, which are next in fullness and precision, and illustration by what is the common knowledge of civilised man?

This almost suggests that this late fashion of research is purposely directed to what is the most ill defined and uncertain, and the professed knowledge of which is confined to the fewest persons, so that men may disguise their own fancies as discoveries of History, and find shelter for themselves from confutation behind that inability to disprove their assertions which has been the safety of other 'travellers' tales.'

Certainly you and I are not bound to follow others in that faulty method. So we will begin with the undisputed fact that before the Christian religion the Hebrew people, and they alone, had long had a belief in One God, the Creator of all else. They had writings, dating back, they believed, fifteen centuries, which they also believed to be the

word of this God to them. In all the nations around them were various religions of many gods and of idol-worship. Such had been the religious beliefs of all the great nations, far outnumbering them, and by whom they had been repeatedly subjugated—and especially at this very time of the mighty Romans, masters of them and all other lands around the Mediterranean Sea. These ‘Judæans,’ as they were then universally called, were also found scattered through all those countries as trading adventurers, much as they are now throughout the world, and in each city they would have their ‘synagogue,’ or place of religious assembly, where their holy writings were read, and other religious instruction given to their children and the rest of their people. Thus they made no attempt to conceal how different their religion was from all others; how, in fact, they considered all other religions as false, impious, and abominable. But neither, on the other hand, did they try to convert others to this religion of theirs. They rather preferred to consider it as one of their marks of superiority to all other men—of their being the exclusive possessors of Divine favour. This is one reason why they were generally disliked by other people. For all that, their peculiar belief as to there being only One true God, Whom they worshipped, became widely known, and could not fail to have some effect upon the thoughts of many others besides the very few who accepted it as the truth, and who sought and were allowed admission among them as ‘proselytes.’

The curious inquirers and speculators in those days, called ‘philosophers,’ studied this ‘new thing,’ because this doctrine of One God was something like one of the abstract questions debated among them. But there is no proof that their attention to the religion of the Jews ever went beyond this curiosity about one or two things. Yet probably the Scriptures of the Old Testament found some readers among the Greeks, especially after their translation into that language, within the two or three hundred years before the Christian era. If so, we may believe that such reading made a much deeper impression upon a thoughtful Pagan, and affected him with an awe of their sublime purity and power, far beyond what he would have got from the dis-



course of any Jew of that day. We cannot possibly know (or on the other hand with fairness utterly reject the supposition) how far the coincidences between the Hebrew Scriptures and some of the best sayings and acts of the Pagans of those ages may have come, even though unconsciously, from their contact with those writings. It was, indeed, a remarkable age for the confused mixing of the religious thoughts and rites of different races and nations, as we shall later more fully see.

Those writings are a very remarkable and curious collection. No scholar or investigator of such matters now questions that they are of great interest for his purposes. They contain within a moderate space the entire history, religion, laws, and thought of a nation (even though it be a small one) for ages. For like research as to the Greeks, Romans, or Indians, we must collect much material from many quarters, and are never sure that something very important is not wanting. The genuine explorer of History, even if these writings had no more sacredness to him than Rollin, could not but be delighted with such a complete and closely connected record of a community for some hundreds of years back of all other distinct history. And to increase this advantage, there was a system of public ceremonies, of like antiquity, exactly parallel with the books, enjoined in them, and corroborating and preserving them,—the Hebrew people believing these writings to be the word of the One true God to them, and that the part of it containing their law and their earliest history had been written down by a great prophet, whom God inspired for this purpose, and gave him power to do vast prodigies in proof of this authority. The other Holy Scriptures they believed had been written by various other like prophets of God during the succeeding ages, for their instruction or reproof; but that now for some four hundred years there had been no more such prophets. They believed, however, that one more was to appear, who, in fact, would be the greatest, and would be their victorious king, setting them above all other nations on the earth. (This last part of their belief must have seemed extremely ridiculous to people of all other religions.)

All these other religions had very much in common, and

it was quite easy for a man to pass from one to the other, as he changed his residence from the country where one prevailed to another. The belief of many gods made it easy to suppose that those which a man properly worshipped in one country had no authority in another where the law recognised other gods. The notion that one's native deities were really the same persons as were adored under another name elsewhere easily mingled itself with this.

Not so with the religion of the Jews. They not only believed that the God Whom they worshipped was especially their God, but that He was the only true God; that all other religions were false and wicked, an incessant sin and sacrilege against the only proper object of worship—the Creator and absolute Lord of all other men as well as themselves. They made no attempt to soften or conceal this exclusive and censorious aspect of their own religion from their masters the Romans, or other Pagans, whom it might be to their interest to please. They seemed to them rather to have a fierce and gloomy pleasure in this, as some revenge for their subjection, which they bore with less patience than almost any others of the vassals of Rome.

Nor was the unity of God the only difference of Jewish religion from all others around it. They maintained as sacredly as that, and as being inseparable from it, that it was a horrible sin to use images in worship. All the other religions were full of image-worship. And then the religion of the Jews had no allowances for sensual vices. Not that they were all virtuous people—not even the most religious of them—no, nor in proportion to their religiousness. But no rite of that religion gave the least suggestion or temptation to any vice.

All that it taught them of their God tended to the most scrupulous virtue. His law, for the very record and letter of which they observed an almost superstitious reverence, forbade such things even in thought.

It represented their God as the Holy One, Who abhorred all uncleanness of spirit. It supposed them to be always needing His forgiveness for their sins, both as to religion, and justice, and purity towards one another. Nothing in the comparison of such things is stranger than that the Jews

should (as to this very day) have preserved and venerated as their greatest treasure, writings which never flatter their great vanity, but which, while 'magnifying the Lord' of their worship by every incident, are at the same time full of the most mortifying rebukes and warnings to them as a most unrighteous and perverse people.

We may give the name of Paganism in general to the religion of the rest of the Roman Empire. Unlike that of the Jews, and therefore much harder to describe, it is not one distinct order set forth in writing, and thus carefully transmitted for many generations. It was in the main made up of mere traditional practices, local laws, and poetry. As a whole, it was a mass of disconnected, inconsistent, and shifting fragments, varying with places and with individual fancies. In this it was like (and in a measure it was what it was because of) the Roman Empire itself, then prevailing from the Euphrates to the Atlantic. Mere conquest and government—not even that of the law-giving and law-enforcing Romans—did not change the languages, traditional characters, or religions of peoples. But it did in some degree mingle these, and modify them by one another. The conquerors carried much that was peculiar to them into all their dominions. But they also were much affected, in turn, by the various peculiar ways of their provinces. The city of Rome itself was still sternly and proudly Roman. Yet every race, nation, tradition, and religion of the Empire began to have its colony and its influence there in the days of Augustus. This was true even of the Jews. But all the other national religions found a still more congenial home there. All these were, in fact, much the same in spirit and in substance, and readily fused into a sort of universal religion for all Roman subjects, except the Jews.

In this belief there were 'gods many.' The general understanding, indeed, was that these counted by thousands. Most of the people, no doubt, thought only of a few, to whom they actually paid some worship, according to their living near certain temples, or the habits and traditions of their immediate region. The public men, the philosophers, the more literary and reading people, allowed these deities to be almost without number. (Let us reflect for a

moment upon the vast difference in effect of this upon the whole religious spirit, from the thought of One only God.)

No one supposed them to be of equal power and authority. A comparative few were far above the rest. There was even a general notion that one of this superior dozen or so was the chief of all, that he was a sort of father of all other persons—hardly a creator. But this is the most that we can fairly make of the Greek Zeus and Latin Jove—and hardly that, for even he and others with him are sometimes given out as the children of another—Saturn; and he again to have progenitors.

From highest to lowest they were supposed to be very human in their ways. The former certainly had all the violent passions, which are the cause of the chief mistakes and miseries of mankind. On this account they had rivalries and quarrels among themselves, and with men and women too. In this last case, the mortal, however innocent, always got the worst of it. A great part of this religion, in its practice, consisted in rites, by which a man was supposed to deprecate the wrath of these many powerful persons when displeased, whether justly or not; or to secure their help against a human rival. This was often to be best done by taking advantage of the quarrels of these fine gods among themselves, or with some unhappy mortal. The occasion of worship may be fairly said to have been in all cases fear. If there are any traces of reverential love for these gods, they are very faint, and the general belief as to their conduct, as already mentioned, was evidently contrary to any such sentiment. To propitiate their favour or appease their displeasure, splendid temples were built to them—sometimes by private offerings, but usually at the public expense. Frequent gifts of useful or costly articles or of money were brought to the temples, and delivered to the priests who were in attendance there. These offerings were understood to be in part for the support of the priests and the worship, which were also a part of the public expense. But, in the main, all that was offered was intended, as especially were the regular sacrifices of 'sheep and oxen,' to appease the divine displeasure at their sins. That all alike needed some such propitiation was always taken for granted, and it

was always associated with the laws which protected every one from the wrong-doing of others.

The thought that law, morals, and religion were inseparable seemed as general then as the very opposite notion is now. I say this of all religions then. And in them, as thus joined, were everywhere, in the main, those same thoughts of right conduct which we now call good morals. The 'gods' of the Pagans were supposed to be displeased with just such things as the laws forbade, and these were just what had the reproach of wickedness among all men, even when they escaped punishment. Did these thoughts also begin and belong together? That is an interesting part of our inquiry into the history of Religion.

I said, everywhere among men in the main. But there were some differences. The Hebrew religion had an account of the matter, much the same as we understand it now, as stated briefly in the Ten Commandments. With the Pagan religions there was at once, to begin with, this great difference—that their gods were believed to do many of these forbidden things themselves, and this with impunity. And even some of these things were reckoned among their admired exploits. This was so as to injustice and untruth; still more so as to violent anger and revenge. Yet the Pagan doctrine was that these things were wrong (at least in some degree); certainly that they caused much harm among men. (I think that many Christian moralists go far beyond the truth in asserting that there was no idea of wrong in revenge, known before our Lord. Certainly He set it in a clearer light, as He did all duty; but some traces of that truth we find before Him.)

But it was especially in regard to all that great part of morals as to the relations of man and woman that the difference was most notable. The wiser Pagans also thought that a modest self-control in these things was a part of the highest virtue; that chastity was one of the greatest duties and honours of a woman; that adultery was a great and shameful crime. [It was rather left for men in modern Christendom—David Hume and the French philosophers of a century ago, and now E. Renan (as Mr. M. Arnold shows him to us, as representing the moral and literary judgment

of his countrymen)—to question all such scruples as being artificial and superstitious ; and to treat this whole part of morals as secondary and conventional.] All History, and all present experience of human life, seem to teach the same—that there is no greater disturber of public and private peace, corruptor of all just scruples, inflamer of the fiercest hatreds, and debaser of society in all its great interests, than that these things should be regarded as inferior matters, so far as right and wrong go—as, after all, rather amusing and inevitable incidents of ordinary life.

Here the Hebrew religion and law were most explicit and solemn. The Pagan law also was not silent, but in a rather feeble and inconsistent way. And how could it well be otherwise? Yet with what must, with our Christian impressions at least, seem a monstrous confusion and perversion of such things, their religion leaned the other way. A very few of their deities were chaste in example and patrons of that virtue. But their poetry and traditions were full of fascinating stories of the immoral and indecent behaviour of their chief ‘gods,’ most of all of him whom they regarded as chief ruler, and often called him ‘the father of gods and men.’ Yet these were the lawgivers of all right and avengers of all wrong committed by men. The most elegant art employed itself in representing these things to their eyes. Even more fatal to modest scruples and self-restraint it was, that some of the most frequented religious ceremonies required behaviour which even law and decency made infamous. Then they carried in procession, and at other times kept them as conspicuous symbols of religion, objects which even the least religious and fastidious civilised people now would not allow in public. These are the facts as to the relation of this religion to morals, however we may think fit to account for this: whether by supposing that they were wiser in this than Christians, or even than the Jews of their time ; or utterly wrong, in this part at least, of their religion.

The Hebrew ideal as to this, indeed, was not so high as the Christian is. Yet there is a very great contrast between its morals and the pagan. One Great, Glorious, and Unseen Person, absolutely and alone Eternal and Almighty ; without

the least tinge of the human faults ; positively forbidding all sins at all times—His temple repelling all impurity ; His worship and praise teaching at all times ‘a clean heart and a right spirit ;’ always calling men to penitence for every sin. The Jews, indeed, were far below this in conduct. The precepts of love for God and man, which are so plain in the Law and the Prophets, were not much to be seen in their lives. The more thoughtful Pagans might well have told them that they did not seem to understand their own religion. It was evidently but a small number of them who observed it in the spirit of humility and penitence, of trusting only in the forgiving mercy of the One Whom they knew as the ‘Maker of all things, Judge of all men,’ and Whom they looked to as having promised yet to make known a way of ‘saving health’ to them and ‘to all nations,’ far beyond even the past glories of their people.

But the whole nation adhered firmly to the forms of their religion, against the very powerful influence of Paganism all around them, which had power, wealth, numbers, and, we may fairly say, ‘human nature,’ on its side. Two of the peculiar things in their method of worship had a great part in this result, and each of these they accounted much more than mere ceremony ; they were a part of the Ten Commandments. Firstly, The worship of God must be only spiritual. No image (or idol) must ever be used to represent Him ; on no pretence whatever must any figure be placed in His temple or anywhere to represent Him, or to be bowed down to in religious performance. Secondly, To divide time by weeks or periods of seven days each, and to devote every seventh day entirely to religion, allowing no labour or ordinary business upon it. In contrast, all Pagan religions around them used idols in worship—in temples and houses everywhere—to kneel and prostrate themselves before in worship. And they had no weekly holy-day, nor anything corresponding to this ; no division of time into weeks : only the months (moons) and year, with not infrequent yet irregular religious festivals upon certain days, though these days were not separated from all secular uses as the Sabbath of the Jews was. How far these two observances of the law of Moses were of the essentials of a true religion, *i.e.*

whether they are conventional details of ritual, for which a true religion might substitute something else, or entirely dispense with them, it is not our purpose now to inquire. It is a plain fact that by them the Jews were at this time most distinctly and constantly marked from all other religions, and by the careful observance of them was prevented that fusion and confusion of religion which seemed otherwise inevitable.

About the Greek Pagan religion, on the other hand, a sort of general poetic spirit of that people had thrown a cloud of traditional fancies and fictions. And some men of great genius had increased this much by poetry and the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture. It is perhaps impossible to say how much of it was the conscious invention of each man, and how much was the sincere religious belief. But what makes it even harder to understand the Paganism of that time, is, that the poets and critics of modern Christendom have repeated it, with their added fancies, with unmeasured admiration and imitation of it as the perfection of beauty in thought and form. Some future and wiser age may regard this idolatry of 'sweetness (and light?)' in the religion of the Greeks and Romans with wonder. Probably the dwellers in Heaven who see it do so now. The most truthful view of it is surely to be found by observing such statements and allusions as we find in the New Testament; next, in the other early Christian writings—perhaps allowing for some little exaggeration; and in the poetic, historic, and histrionic writings of the classic age, read with care. Any good classic Greek dictionary, examined in its copious vocabulary of such terms, will give a glimpse of what sort of religion as to morals this was. A suggestive incident also is, that the one man who just before for a long time held the highest religious authority in the Roman dominion—and this by popular choice, not from his victorious autocratic power, which he did not achieve until long afterward—was Julius Cæsar, a notorious profligate, and well known to his intimates as an atheist in opinion.

Another great fact of this time was that religious faith had long been declining among the Pagans. The rich and intelligent all knew something of the philosophers; and the



conjectures and reasonings of all those ingenious men threw doubt upon their religion. Some of the philosophy disclaimed this, but some of it was entirely (and so avowed to be) 'sceptical.' It followed out certain reasonings (just as some modern writers have done, and no mere reasoning can refute them) to prove that we can really know nothing. And while all men's worldly common sense practically rejected this as to our material life, they were not unwilling to be persuaded that there were no unseen superior beings for them to be afraid of. The raillery of such persons about the characters and performances of 'the gods' had also some effect upon the thoughtless and ignorant, the multitude who continued to believe just what their forefathers had. It lessened their reverence, and made them less careful about ceremonies and sacrifices. And yet so deep-seated was the religious feeling that even then it was not much safer to be supposed a disbeliever in Divine things than it was in the days of Socrates, four centuries before.

And with all this beauty of art and indulgence of sensual desire, the pagan religion was not a happy but a gloomy one. 'The gods,' indeed, were not good and great enough for reverent love; but they were powerful, and capricious, and malicious enough to be much feared. This, added to a vague sense of guilt, both towards their fellow-men and towards this unseen Power which avenged all wrong, made them anxious to propitiate it by sacrifices; and the more painful and bloody—even those of men, women or children—the more effective. At this time human sacrifices were very rare. Yet, as religion always mingled much with war, it made that more cruel. It gave countenance, even if it did not give rise, to the most barbarous amusement of the Romans in their most refined days—the deadly combats of captive slaves, the gladiators—in presence of vast multitudes of eager and delighted spectators.

Nor was this brutal contempt for men's lives because they thought our life has no more dignity or duration than that of beasts. It was a part of their religion that, when men die, their souls begin another life—better and happier if they have been good in this; or a fearful punishment. The hope of the former, however, seems to have been very

faint and cold, while the terrors of the latter were much more real to them. Religion never made one of them die with a joyful hope, or transformed the black, despairing grief of a great bereavement into the sweet patience of a like hope. The symbol over every tomb was a torch reversed ; the inscription some wail of hopeless and terrible sorrow. A very few philosophic Pagans might commit suicide calmly ; but most of them saw in death only the ruin of all desire, and fled from it by every struggle. The most virtuous was not sure whether his destination was Elysium or Tartarus, or whether the former existed at all. He might not have displeased most of 'the gods.' Yet to some one of them he might have given unwitting offence, and meet his wrath as he left this life. And even besides this, there was something called Fate, or Destiny, which nothing that he could do could arrest, nor even all 'the gods' combined resist. Only when he died, as he had seen others 'go hence and be no more seen,' would he know how that would at last dispose of him.

This then was, in general, the religion of the Roman dominions. That of the elder Romans had been not quite the same—perhaps a little simpler, though not less strange to us. But it was now all merged in this prevailing Greek mythology, with its adornment of art and of poetic fiction.

The Egyptian religion was even older yet ; in some things admitted to be the original of the Greek ;<sup>1</sup> but, utterly unlike that, it never had pleased the eye or the mind with beauty. The temples, the ceremonies, the images, had a solemn and gloomy vastness, which impressed the beholder with awe ; it had also the fascination of whatever was most hideous and disgusting. The images before which the worshippers prostrated themselves and made the offerings were not the ideals of human beauty which were adored in the Greek temples, but of repulsive beasts and reptiles or insects ; in fact, their greatest deities were actual living bulls, cats, or crocodiles, and the like.

But now this too appears as one of the varieties of Greek Paganism (while these ugly peculiarities of Egyptian religion find imitators and devotees in Rome and the other great cities around the Mediterranean). Since the wonder-

<sup>1</sup> See Clem. Alex. *Strom.* vi. 4 ; also Stillingfleet, *Orig. Sacre* ; Bryant, *Anc. Mythol.* ; Grote, *Hist. of Greece*, etc. etc.

ful conquests of Alexander of Macedon, Egypt had been governed by Greek law and thought, and to all this the Romans had now succeeded for two generations.

The Syrian and Arabian peoples to the east of Palestine retained in the same way something of their old religion. And as the limits of Roman power towards the rising sun were reached at the river Euphrates, the influence of Persian beliefs and usages was evident. These even had their effect upon the religion, and still more the philosophy, of all the Empire.

Here were religious thoughts, indeed, which quite varied from the polytheistic Paganism, and might even be taken to be akin to the religion of the Jews. One variety of this supposed but two gods—one the Supreme Good, the other the Supreme Evil; between them eternal war existed, the dominion over mankind being one of the matters of this strife. Worship had to be paid by men to both; but, in fact, fear enforced more religion to the evil god than hope gave to the other.

Another variety of the Persian religion which for centuries had rivalled this among these Assyrian and Parthian tribes, was that the sun, moon, and planets were the gods to be adored and obeyed by all. To keep always burning a sacred fire, and to worship the sun, seem to have been a great part of the ceremonial of both these religions. These were adopted into the Greek and Roman rites. So, too, the notion of eternal war between good and evil, and the strange legends or allegories about this, found their way into the philosophies of the West. But the opposition of all this to the express words, as well as to the whole spirit, of the sacred writings of the Jews, was irreconcilable; so that, while there was some union and fusion of this with the other Paganism, the Jews kept as clear of it as of all the rest. Thus, in substance, there was now simply a contest between a Paganism of many 'gods,' superstitious fables, and indecent rites—which seem to be the religion of almost all mankind,—and one small subject nation, with the simple and comparatively spiritual religion of the Hebrew Scriptures; a rocky isle, which steadily threw back the fierce waves of the great sea that rolled around.

## CHAPTER II.

### MATERIALS FOR THE RESEARCH IN THE EARLIER HISTORY, AND ITS RESULTS.

HOW came men to have these religions? how came they to have any such beliefs or fancies? This is a question of History,—one of its greatest; in the judgment of some, much the greatest of its questions. How shall we now make this search back from the Christian era?

In general, the materials for such inquiry are—(1) Official chronicles or records of public events, preserved from their date by responsible authority; (2) Public celebrations of such events, continued from former times in unbroken succession—as anniversary days, political or religious rites, etc.; (3) Books of history, usually the compositions of private authors, for the very purpose of giving to the men of their own time or of following generations a complete account of public events; (4) Other writings, contemporary or nearly so, of the events, and incidentally mentioning them; (5) Laws from time immemorial, implying such beliefs or events; (6) Inscriptions upon monuments or public buildings; (7) Other ancient writings, but the date of which can only be vaguely conjectured; (8) Such records and inscriptions, but in languages utterly lost for ages, and the reading of which can be made only by conjecture, however ingenious; (9) The growth of languages and the probable derivation and affinities of words.

Each of these may have great value, and about in proportion as they are numbered. The last mentioned become more useful as the others fail or become obscure. It is plain that as we combine them, especially if the first (and so far as they are) are supplemented by the others, the result is most trustworthy. But we all know (in my own personal knowledge of the inaccuracy of statements which are now

passing into 'History' uncontradicted, I have had occasion to notice this) that private (even public?) and contemporary history may make great mistakes from not knowing important facts, and from that unconscious perversion which prejudice more or less works in every human mind in its own mere though most sincere beliefs. On the other hand, public chronicles or inscriptions *may* be more or less the utterances of untruthful vanity. Ceremonies *may* diverge through ages from their first meaning. Laws and languages *may* shift very far by unnoticed deviations. The only possible *certainty* of History would be for some one who is more true and truthful than man ever is to give or guarantee this certainty. Short of this, we must be thankful and contented with tolerable and general probability as to past or even contemporaneous events.

Perhaps for the period now before us the Greek and Roman history is much the best as to some of the materials already enumerated. We will therefore begin with it and what it tells us of the beginnings of the Pagan religions. For the first 500 years to which this applies, and which carries us back of Herodotus, whom his people called the Father of History, we find considerable change, but no beginning. We do see three great influences mingling and modifying the Paganisms of different nations: traffic, war, and philosophy. Especially as we go back of the great events which during that time had built the Macedonian and Roman Empires, we see those religions as they existed apart, and before that fusion which we have seen to prevail at the Christian Era. Yet the resemblances remain. But in all of them, so far as there is a history—and especially in the Greek lands where that history is most plain—the same deities are worshipped and the same rites observed as they read about in the poems of Homer and Hesiod, who wrote in a still earlier age. And all repeated from these earlier writers that their religion had come down from their ancestors, and that these had received it with their other earliest laws from 'the gods' themselves.

Those who had the most religious doubt never claimed to account for all these things by the inventions of any men. The more truth-loving of the philosophers also said that in

their journeys into distant lands, and other inquiries into the religions of other countries, all traditions agreed that 'the gods' themselves had given Religion and Law as their first and greatest gifts. Herodotus implies this as the result of the curious and candid inquiries which he made among the Egyptians and other nations which he visited for the purpose. These conclusions and statements by such men as Celsus, Cicero, Plato, and Socrates, are more remarkable, and most useful as evidence of the fact of this belief, however we may account for it. Their intellectual tendency was to question what was traditional in such matters,—still more when it was supernatural.

Thus Celsus, as quoted by Origen (*Contra Celsum*, i. 7, p. 266): 'A divine spirit descended to acquaint the ancients with the divine truths they taught the world.' Cicero (*Tusc. Ques.* L. i. n. 26): 'Philosophy (Theology, as we would say), mother of all arts, as Plato says, the gift, as I say (also) the discovery of the gods.' Plato: 'After a certain flood which but few escaped, etc., they had neither letters, writing, nor laws, but obeyed the manners and institutions of their fathers as laws, etc., those especially that related to their gods, and thus transmitted them to their posterity,' etc. etc., and in many other like passages (*De Legibus*, lib. iii. 677; see also *Philebus*, etc.). Xenophon is another like recorder of the sayings of Socrates, less original for himself than Plato, but perhaps more accurate as to his master. He reports this in his *Memorabilia* or Memorable Sayings (*Mem. loc.* i. 4) that Socrates said: 'He is a pious man who serves the gods, not in what manner he pleases, but as the laws made for that purpose direct, etc.; that these laws were given us by the gods; that whatever force the laws have they receive it from the gods.' The great Demosthenes also speaks of it as what all believed, that laws are the invention and gift of God (*Orat. against Aristot.*).

Earlier than this the Greek history begins to be as disconnected and uncertain as that of all other nations is, with one exception. We are passing back out of the region of careful written history, of literature, chronology, chronicles, and monuments, into the misty land of mere fragments of fact and irresponsible traditions. But just before we reach

this we find in quite another quarter a strong and steady clue left us for some centuries yet. During the interval of some 400 or 500 years before Christ, which we have been able to traverse quite plainly as to the Pagan Greeks and Romans, there appeared some writers among the Jewish people. But these writings are evidently much inferior (always so acknowledged by the Jews themselves) to their earlier ones.

Of these later authors Josephus, an historian, and Philo, a philosopher, wrote about the time of the Advent. Further back we have the Apocrypha, including histories of the Maccabees, warlike chiefs who led their countrymen in a very determined, and, for a while, very successful struggle against the Greek-Syrian kings. One great occasion of this contest was to prevent the overthrow of their religion, and in this they did entirely succeed against the greatest odds of power. All the evidence concurs in showing that they maintained for the period mentioned the religion which they had received in their sacred books from a preceding age, and as before described.

But even in the times of the Maccabees, about a century—say 166-63 B.C. to when the Roman Pompey besieged and took Jerusalem—the Jews could be considered an independent State only by the sufferance of the powerful sovereigns around them,—those of Syria, or (the Ptolemies) of Egypt, who were so employed in their great wars with one another that each would either abet the revolt of the Jews from the other, or quite neglect them.

As for the other Pagans outside of the Greek dominions, even if we include the native population of Egypt, we have no other history to resort to. During this period, Manetho, an Egyptian, is said to have compiled from the archives of his country, as preserved in the temples, a history running back for thousands of years. But we have only some fragments of this, as preserved by Josephus, and a brief epitome of it in a Christian writer 300 years later yet. And what we have is somewhat confused and improbable; in the judgment of some of the most capable, does not at all agree with what can now be deciphered from inscriptions and papyri in the remains of that mysterious country. However, it is not

without some historical value ; and what it gives us as to the origin of religion in this period, or earlier, simply agrees with what has been said as to the Pagan beliefs of this period.

And so with like fragments of Chaldee and Phœnician history by Berosus and Sanchoniatho. What these may suggest for a still earlier period we shall see further on. The earlier Roman history, which goes but a little way back, and soon enters the region of evident myth, is to the same effect—of a tradition of receiving Religion from their ‘gods’ themselves ; and that they first adored the sun, moon, and stars, and other great objects of sight.

All this is true in exactly the same way of the traditions and monuments to which we must resort instead of connected history among Pagan nations for 500 years earlier yet, say to B.C. 1000. Among the Greeks, the poems of Homer and Hesiod tell us much of the life of their people. The former, near the beginning of this period, and perhaps a contemporary of Solomon, gives us a great picture of the ways and thoughts of his people, then rising, with their daring adventures and ingenious speculations, to be in some things the English of ancient history. But it is his simple and most lifelike story of their domestic life, their laws, society, and religion, which is worth more to truth than most history. Hesiod, about two centuries later, is far less poetic ; and yet, contrary to the proverbial expression, less simply truthful. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* tell us how that people all believed and observed this religion of many gods (but not near as many as in the enlightened days of Pericles, Phidias, and Plato) ; of sacrifices, sometimes even human ; and of oracles, which they had from their forefathers, among whom these gods themselves had mingled, to teach men rites, virtues, arts, and laws (see also *supra*, p. 18). Hesiod labours in an artificial way to give what he supposes a more reasonable account of the same things, and of the reasons of them. The ‘*Theogony*’ which commonly goes by his name would be more valuable if it were not quite plain that it is by some later hand. But whoever the author, it is a laboured essay to show that all the gods and goddesses, and their adventures, are a sort of allegory of what we now



call the forces of Nature ; which thought evidently entered nobody's mind in the days of Homer and earlier. It belongs with the toilsome beginnings of Philosophy then, just as it is the delight of many in these last days of Philosophy.

On the other hand, all other legends of the time as to the most powerful and revered princes and legislators of the past, Minos, Numa, Lycurgus, Zoroaster, etc.,—some of these, having risen by such services from human life into the rank of 'gods' themselves,—say that they received their wisdom from some 'god' who condescended to talk with them. It is a curious thing that among such great men Strabo mentions Moses.

Two remarkable characters in the history of Religion appeared early in this period, at about the same time, in the Far East—Buddha (Sakyamuni) and Confucius (*circa* 550 B.C.). But all their adventures and teachings imply that a religion of many gods, of sacrifices and superstitions, had been observed in India and China for ages before them, and was supposed to have been taught to their ancestors by the deities themselves.

The great central Pagan power at the beginning of this period was that of the Persians. Their religion was a strange mixture of the most sensual and sanguinary idolatry which prevailed in their subject provinces around the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates, with another religion which (as already noticed) was more like the simple and spiritual one of the Jews. But all their people agreed that both these, as well that of the two gods as that of many, had been received by remote tradition from former ages. It is true also, and the signs of it grow more frequent and striking as we ascend to the earliest sources, that everywhere—in Egypt as well as in Persia and Syria, and in India in its most extravagant idolatry of this period (for while the Greeks would number 30,000, some even say 300,000 deities, the Hindus reckoned theirs at thirty millions)—there were scattered faint traces of belief in only One holy and spiritual God.

The Egyptian priests were said to have a secret doctrine of the kind. The writings of philosophers and others among the Greeks sometimes seem to imply a like notion. The Persian Zoroaster (or Zerdusht) of this very age appears

to have taught positively that the prevailing polytheism was a monstrous corruption of the original true religion. The more learned Hindus pointed out that in their earliest books, written probably about the beginning of this period (say 1000 B.C.), some such thought was found. And yet none of these, except the Persians, treated it as more than a vague speculation, which did not prevent their joining in all the acts and ways of the idolatrous religion, in its most superstitious as well as its most immoral usages. Much less did they care to convert their countrymen from such error.

If there be any exception to this it is as to the doctrine of Zoroaster (Zerdusht), the Persian ; that is, if some modern scholars correctly interpret what we have of his writings. But the whole subject is still involved in confusion and contradictions, and opinions are divided. (See researches of Anquetil, Rask, Haug, etc.) It is not clear *when* he lived within 500 years. If we allow this to be, as I think most probable, at the beginning (as others say, at the end) of this period, we have but a small fragment at the best of his own writing. And if, as some say, he wrote plainly of the One Eternal God, as the Creator of all, this belief, if not obscured by other teachings of his own, was so obscured very soon by those of his followers, as we now find them in the book of the 'Zend-Avesta.'

The key of this puzzle at least *may* be in what he claimed,—that he was trying to restore the earlier and purer religion of their forefathers, which would then have shown in this particular (as also in many striking points of ceremony and history) a great likeness to the Hebrew Scriptures. But if this was a part of his design, it was then overborne by the same powerful current of tendency toward a less spiritual religion, which had prevailed before. The patient student of all these remains needs to be cautious in all his conclusions. This much seems quite plain, that there were several neighbour and kindred nations of those parts—Elamites, Medes, Persians, etc.,—among whom different religions prevailed ; and by wars, alliances, or like events, one of these religions would displace the others, and be in turn subjected by one of them.<sup>1</sup> But that of the 'Zend' was professed by the

<sup>1</sup> See Rawlinson's *Five Great Monarchies*, i. etc.

great Persian kings who reigned about the end of this period, though, as before mentioned, it was then mixed with much of the cruel superstitions of the others, and was as immoral.

That it was after all a very different one from that of the Jews was strongly illustrated at this very time by the two being brought in close contact. All the principal families of the latter people lived as captive exiles far from their own country for a whole generation, in Babylonia, under the Persian kings, whose court was there,—as they had done for the generation before under the kings of Babylon, who brought them there. But the Jews no more relinquished their religion for that of the Persians than for the other, and returned afterwards from exile as unyielding in this to their new and kinder masters as they had been to the others. In fact, from this time forth they were far more steadfast and exclusive as to the religion of other nations than ever before.

We will now ascend *their* history for the same period, for the same purpose of seeking the beginnings of their religion. And here we do find, as has been already intimated, a clear and connected narrative of events for all this time,—in the books of Nehemiah, Ezra, the Chronicles, and the Kings. And, what is still more to our purpose, the religious side of the history is not merely incidental, but is the main thing. Upon examination we find that, though very brief, it fulfils and combines more of the requisites for belief than even the Greek history of a later age. It is connected and continuous. It is authoritative and responsible. It was in the special keeping of a succession of high officers for safety and authentication; and yet it was freely in the hands of all the people, as a safeguard against alterations or forgeries. It was accompanied by contemporaneous usages, and celebrations which were never entirely interrupted. With it are also various other valuable writings of the same period, agreeing with its statements (see *supra*, p. 5). Altogether, these writings are a treasure to the curious and candid explorer of the past. Some may assume that whatever is related in them as supernatural must be excluded and treated as myth. Even upon this demand enough remains to justify what I have said.

It is scarcely possible to overrate their value in antiquarian research or the higher attempts of History. We can get some idea of this by supposing that a like find should now be made of a collection of papyri in one of the Pyramids, or of cylinders at Babylon. The delight now felt in reading any imperfect inscriptions or other fragments of such history that we can put together from time to time, making conjectures of the missing lines or words, would be multiplied manifold.

The legend (if it be only that) which is the thread of all this history is, that they were all the descendants of one man, Israel (or Jacob), who was a pastoral chief in Palestine some 1400 years before. As such their proper designation was, the children (sons) of Israel. All their chief families, priests, and princes (only the poorer people left in a disorganised state) were brought to Babylon, about the year 600 B.C., by the great Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who had invaded and conquered their country long before, and now, having entirely demolished the city of Jerusalem with the great Temple, used this effectual means to prevent any subsequent revolt of their kings.

The Jews were indeed only a part of what had once been the children of Israel. The larger fragment perhaps had been separated from them by a revolt for three centuries past, and was called Israel, while the old dynasty, keeping the capital city, the Temple, and the priesthood, was distinguished by the name of the royal tribe of Judah. Great vicissitudes had befallen this people since the revolt of Israel. There had been frequent wars with their sister kingdom, defections of their own kings and people from their religion to the idolatry of bordering nations; and later yet, as culminating in that of Babylon, invasion and subjugation by Pagan powers. Yet all this time, so the history relates, their one Temple of the One God had stood in great magnificence at Jerusalem: its rites had never been quite suspended, even when other religions had seemed to prevail.

The kingdom of Israel entirely disappeared long before this. The conquering Assyrians added the people to their other subjects, and carried off their king and nobles to the region of the Upper Euphrates, replacing them in part by

people from that country. But the scattered Israelites who were left seemed to have mostly either migrated south to Judah, or, remaining in their old homes, considered themselves still of the old people and religion, and resorted to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple there. After the return of the Jews from Babylon, and the rebuilding of the Temple, a sect of Samaritans, professing the Law of Moses, was set up among the Assyrian colonists, and some traces of it exist to this day. But it is of no importance except as collateral evidence of the Jewish history.

The main fact, however, was, that these old Sacred Writings had always been acknowledged as the true law, both civil and religious, of the nation, and always had a number of faithful adherents among the common people and the priests, even when kings, princes, and chief priests deserted it. The succession of priests by family descent had been kept up; and besides this, from time to time there had arisen men called Prophets of (or speakers for) God, to protest against the false religion and recall them to the true. Writings of these Prophets now formed a large part of these Holy Scriptures. With them were the histories and chronicles already mentioned, and some said to be earlier yet; and also, and more than all, what was called the original book of their Law, claimed to be of 500 years yet earlier date. In addition there were some writings of a poetical and devotional kind, mainly ascribed to two of the earliest and most famous kings, who reigned over all the sons of Israel before the separation of the two kingdoms. Take this Scripture at what value we will as history, its result is that this people looked back even of the beginning of this period for the beginning of their religion. (I believe there is no question whatever made that this King Solomon did build the great Temple of Jerusalem, and that before this its ritual was celebrated in a great tent or tabernacle, as described in the Book of Moses.)

We are now indeed quite alone with these Scriptures for anything like history. Nothing among the Greeks, nothing at all clear and connected in what we can study of the Egyptian or Assyrian remains, nothing Indian or Chinese, or of other races, gives us a path to follow further back in

the search. These Israelites are a very small part of the mankind whose religious thought and actual worship we would pursue to the sources. But is it not vastly better than as if we had no such clue? May it not possibly lead to the discovery of all?

Let us again look well at our position. We are now going far back of the Vedas and the Zend. No writings whatever survive to guide us here, unless it is those Sacred Scriptures of the Jews. Even the new-discovered Assyrian and Egyptian writing, interesting as it is, cannot serve this purpose. In fact, all the careful and eager explorers of these things, whatever their religious opinions, find the Hebrew Scriptures indispensable for suggestions to their researches.

There were then great kingdoms, with princes, palaces, temples: with large armies, populous cities, and other incidents of riches and refinement. But, indeed quite contrary to what we should suppose, it is not there that we find the books; but among a people rather rural and pastoral: without any large towns, and shut up to themselves in a small region: having no part in the great wars of those ages, for all those 500 years. It is not common sense to *assume* that writing was not known among them then; and therefore the books cannot be genuine, no matter what proof is shown for them. That would be merely begging the whole question. (See this whole matter fully examined in Chapter XV.)

For our search so far it has not been necessary to assume when any of these Hebrew Scriptures were written, even those which profess to relate the earlier history. At the very least they contain the agreed traditions of that people. All this concurs in the main result as reached everywhere else: that no man or men of those times invented the religion; that it came down from remote earlier ages; from one generation to another.

But many of the greatest scholars have believed, as the result of investigation, that this history was written by Moses himself, 500 years yet earlier than David. And there is no great change in religious thought in all this vast lapse of 1100 years from Moses to Malachi. The writings of David or those of Moses are as spiritual as what we read in

the later Prophets : far more so than those of Plato or of any moderns who do not merely repeat those Scriptures (or follow certain other writings which are avowed to be in entire accord with them).

Let us then assume, if only as a hypothesis for our further search, that the so-called Books of Moses may have been written, as their later possessors always claimed, some 1500 years B.C. Here they do note a very great event in the religious history. The writer records that he was commanded by the One Only God to lead his countrymen out of the great kingdom of Egypt, where they had been a tribe of slaves for hundreds of years, to conduct them across the deserts of Arabia to this land of Canaan or Palestine, and to give them the laws and religious rites written in these books. Be this imposture, fanaticism, or simple truth, one may well allow it to be *fact*, so far as it notes the beginning of the Jewish state and ritual.

Is there any other better statement of the origin of what did originate some time or other than this, that one Moses uttered and wrote down this system of laws, beliefs, and rites? and that the Israelites then followed it? It thus corresponds with all other suggestions of history, including this, that law and religion were always united.

Some one may think that we may now at least account for the religion of Israel as Moses taught it, by his deriving it from that of Egypt. But that would be at the very most mere conjecture. And so far as the present reading of Egyptian remains goes, it is entirely against this. They show us the religion of Egypt in that age as unlike that of Israel as was that of Pagan Greece afterwards. If we were going to refuse all faith to any history, simply because what was related is, as we think, impossible, I hardly know a stronger case that could occur than would be, if Moses simply claimed to have imposed all this religion upon his countrymen without any previous religion of theirs, or even any agreement of this with their former religion. Not even did Mohammed do this, or anything like it. But this, or anything like it, the history of Moses does *not* relate. On the contrary, all of it implies that the oppressed Israelites believed in One Great God of their fathers : that they had

priests and sacrifices for their worship of Him : that their deliverer merely presented himself to them as a messenger from that God : and that the ritual and laws given afterwards were for His worship and service.

If now we desire to go yet further back for another 500 years, we find the Book of Moses again offering itself as our guide. Of course he had no personal or contemporary knowledge of those events. But in this he *may* give us the best traditions of his people and ancestors, or even the substance of earlier records. According to this, too, he is not the inventor of the thought of One God among the Israelites, or of the general ideas of right and duty as a part of their religion, which are assumed in all that Law, and all which they supposed they had inherited from their ancestor Israel when he brought his family into Egypt.

Thus we ascend by some seven generations to one Abraham, from whom had descended all this people, and from him also to them all this religion of the One Only True God. Did he then first invent or discover this? If we have a religious faith in the history, we believe that God Himself spoke to him, confirmed him in this his faith and worship, and exhorted him to stand fast in it against all contrary and encroaching religions around him. But short of that, this history distinctly implies that the beginning of the religion was not with him : that his progenitors for ten generations before had known this very religion. The very first sentence in the history of Abraham is (Gen. xii. 1) : 'Now the Lord (*Jehovah*—the most sacred name of the One God) had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country,' etc. This of itself supposes One already known and adored, Who has but to command and He is obeyed.

There were others also of his time, even in the strange land where he now went to dwell, who knew of the God 'Jehovah,' whether they themselves followed other religions, as Abimelech of Gerar, or were themselves worshippers of Him, as Melchizedek. Certainly we have not yet come to the beginning of all Religion. All men then took it as a matter of course received from their forefathers, as much as the keeping of sheep or the use of fire.

In the same way another 500 years carries us back to



Noah, the ancestor of Abraham, and (as most of us think) of all mankind. And we find him too adoring and obeying 'Jehovah.'

Yet even here, though in the judgment of most scholars already far back of any other remains of History, the Book of Moses does not leave us. It professes to trace all human ancestry back for some 1600 or more years (compute this as we will: for we do not need now to enter upon the question of disputed chronologies) to the very first man and woman, and tells of their having this same religion—the thought of One Only God, Who had made them and all else that exists by His Will: to Whom, and to Whom alone, they were to pay most devout reverence and loving obedience. This religion begins with their life. There is no suggestion of their discovering it: there is no time for that. God is supposed to have provided them with it at once, as one of the necessary parts of their life,—the most necessary. It is this which the history implies had descended from father to son through all the generations to Noah, then to Abraham, and so on with his descendants. Here is a distinct theory (if we choose only to treat it as that) of the origin of Religion, which is worth testing now more exactly and in detail by the reverse process of what we have been till now pursuing: that is, by following it *down* from its supposed beginning. To say the least, it also supplies a basis for investigating the origin of all other religions, if it does not even now suggest the true solution of those questions also.

## CHAPTER III.

### ‘NATURAL RELIGION.’

THERE is a phrase current with all theological and philosophical writers for the last two centuries, which, if it expresses our belief, is a pre-judgment of this question. It is, ‘Natural Religion,’—as something apart from and earlier in time than ‘Revealed Religion.’ On the part of Christians, certainly this is not meant as a denial of God’s having told them directly, or, as the word is commonly understood, ‘revealed,’ much of what they now know and believe of Him. Yet it is supposed that all this came after mankind knew something of Him already by ‘Nature.’ We shall therefore need now to divest ourselves of this prepossession, at least so far as to suspend our judgment, while we try the theory that the very beginning of such knowledge, and of all religion, comes by direct information from God. So I shall endeavour now to show why the notion of ‘Natural Religion’ is, to say the least, no such certain and self-evident truth as it commonly passes for. I should do injustice to the truth also not to notice that though it now ‘seems to be allowed on all hands as an agreed principle of the Christian religion (if there are any protests against it they are rather faint, and are never followed up by using the other view in argument); it has been expressly rejected by some of the wisest and most devout of Christian doctors. For example, Archbishop Magee, in his very valuable book upon *Atonement and Sacrifice*, which is a treasury of learning and reason, argues this clearly (i. pp. 34-43), and calls those divines who have insisted upon ‘Natural Religion’ ‘mistaken interpreters of Revelation

who depart from the written Word of God to follow the guidance of their own fancies,' etc.<sup>1</sup>

It is agreed, then, that these later generations of men, to whom a revelation or 'Word of God' (as I shall always prefer to call it)<sup>2</sup> came, either (1) had by tradition some remains of an original Word of God to the first man; or, (2) such a word having been given, it had been utterly lost to them (and of course to all the rest of mankind); or (3) there never had been any such primitive Word of God. But only in the two later cases can 'Natural Religion' be possible. For in the first case supposed, the surviving thought of Some One Unseen and above them—this repeated and kept alive in them all by all 'His wonderful works' before their eyes, with the associated thoughts of right and truth in all things between man and man,—this would be a sufficient foundation for the further 'revelation' to build upon, without imagining a 'Natural Religion' which had never existed in fact. Indeed, would not that intelligence of man, which it is supposed could arrive at the thought of God by its own processes, not only have prevented any impairing but have also improved upon any knowledge first given by God of Himself and of the other matters of spiritual life?

We are left, then, to assume, that if there was a 'Natural Religion,' either there never had been a primitive 'revelation,' or that, having been once received, it was in the course of time utterly lost. But of this latter there is no historical proof whatever; not the faintest tradition. It is not in the writings upon whose evidence we may believe that God did teach man religion at the beginning. If we have supposed that it is to be allowed as a probable conjecture, upon attentive examination it is most *improbable*. For if the soul of man is so disposed towards religious belief that, beginning

<sup>1</sup> See also Ellis's *Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation*, passim, one of those valuable but neglected books which our age would be the wiser for consulting; Leland's *View*, etc., Let. xxvii. etc.

<sup>2</sup> 'Revelation' is not the term which Holy Scripture uses to describe the thing in question. And it is in effect ambiguous and unsafe in this argument. For a man may use it (especially in this age, when so much is said and admired about 'God's Works' being as much what He tells mankind as His Word written), and say that he includes in it also whatever mankind come at by their observation and reasonings.

without any information, it would be sure to arrive at this at last, no matter how slow or hard the process; then much more would it have never let that belief go utterly, once gained by any means.

A partial illustration of this will be in supposing a company of people who are trying their ingenuity upon a verbal puzzle, and utterly baffled for a while, though one of them has much more than common talent that way. The great difficulty is in the first hint as to where the solution lies; some clue which the ingenious man can follow up. If this is given to all alike, he will be first to pursue it to the answer. But suppose more than this, that the complete answer had been known to him just before. Is it possible (I was going to say,—but I *will* say), Is it *likely*, that he has at once so forgotten it, that he will go on groping with the rest after the very first step?

Yet the theory of 'Natural Religion' supposes the puzzle of a Universe and life set before the inquisitive eyes and mind of man, which he will never rest until he works out for himself: this key of all existence, in a Supreme, Invisible Power and Creator, Whom he must worship. Surely once having this he could never have lost it, and sunk into the blank helpless stupidity of having no religion whatever! I *may* believe this if it is yet proved as fact. But I surely cannot be expected to accept it only because it is asserted; and even refuse to attend to another account of these things which offers to test itself by proof.

Or are we to assume the other alternative, viz., that there never was any religious thought, any idea of God, until men discovered (or imagined) it, by wondering at the life and power around and within them: and going on to ask themselves and one another what all this meant: until perhaps by a hundred generations of slow advance they reached the idea and practice of a religion? What proof of *this* have we as a fact? None whatever. We have already seen that as we pushed on back through the ages for 4000 years, finding religion everywhere, and interrogating every race and region for the beginnings of it, each answered—'It is not in me,' and pointed us still backward to earlier forefathers, from whom they had received it. If any answered more

than this, it was that God or 'the gods' had taught it to their remote ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

And this bare conjecture also of a primitive human invention of Religion—indeed either of those by which we make a place for 'Natural Religion,'—has its antecedent improbabilities. From frequent reading of such things without dissent, we may have got into the habit of thinking them reasonable. But now endeavouring, for the purpose of searching out the truth, to dismiss such prepossessions—is it so? why is it so? Let us try and represent to ourselves the process in each of these alternatives, and compare it with any traces of fact which we do have.

Adam (or the first man by any name), having not only known of the One Only True God, but personally known Him and been 'blessed' by Him, and informed not only of His being and power and graciousness, but also of whatever else was necessary to His spiritual life, his descendants, after some generations, lost all idea of this. No parents spoke to their children, or in the inquisitive hearing of their chil-

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be directly recognised by the writer of the articles on 'Natural and Revealed Religion' in Blunt's *Theological Dictionary*, in saying that 'the natural way to inquire how much knowledge is thus discoverable would be by an appeal to history; how much has without supernatural assistance been discovered by man. . . . The historical evidences of a religion are all-important: but to talk of its pre-historical evidence is self-contradictory.' Of these articles, as a whole, it seems to me that, while there is much profound thought and some just statements, there is to be seen throughout them the misleading effect of *all* attempts to argue about religion 'philosophically'—a *necessity* of throwing the mind back of its Christian faith, though that faith is in fact more true than any philosophy (an absurdity and folly for me, even if it be a logical necessity of the argument); and thus afterwards in fact leaving it more or less in the unfortunate position of uncertainty and questioning, if not doubt. But if I may take these sentences following (p. 635) as implying the writer's acceptance of the certain *truth*, as *between* the two, and as a *rejection* of the whole notion of a 'Natural Religion' as he has described it, that being shown to be in its very nature contrary to *facts* and to our best thoughts, then we are of accord. 'In the scheme of revelation we know nothing of God but what He has told us, either when first He made us or since. We therefore have no ground for hope that we can by our own effort find out anything further about Him. He who has *discovered* that God is, may easily find what He is: he to whom God has revealed Himself can only wait for the time when, not by our study, but by His mere permission, "we shall see Him as He is." . . . For example, it concerns us to know that God created us, if we are to behave as His creatures; we can believe in the Creator without knowing, at least in this life, why He created, when He did, and *not* before.'

dren, of any such Person or Power. The whole of mankind became as ignorant and stupid about this as the wild beasts around them. Then, after no one knows how many generations of such existence, some begin to notice that there were strange things around and above them, mysteries of power and life ; to wonder how this came to be, until, slowly improving upon this, they discover Religion. In any other matter would not a mere conjecture like this seem a rather wild tale, requiring a great deal of credulity in us to believe it? Why, if men descended from the earlier intelligence to be more like the beasts, were they not more likely and almost certain to go further in that direction, much less to reverse that tendency?

Or take the other case, and as this will almost of necessity require, lay aside, so far as one of us Christians can, the whole Christian impression (or prejudice?), and have as much confidence in the writings of some men of this generation as so many have had in an old book about the beginnings of our race. Suppose this descendant of anthropoids of whom they tell us, who has just begun to be *anthropos* enough to make the first advances towards such things as finally culminate in religion. Try to follow him step by step through these sunless tracts of conjecture, until we emerge into the regions of actual history, and find the whole of mankind believing and practising as religion—what? One simple, true, though incomplete Natural Religion, to which a ‘revelation’ can add the other things which a man needs to know and believe for his soul’s health? No; but, as we have before seen, a vast collection of different notions and observances, which no Christian would admit to belong to that Natural Religion in which he has been believing. But take it as a whole—that is, as regards far the greater part of mankind at that time,—and this is all the fairer, because in such a test we should rather leave out that very small part of mankind whose supposed history we are about to examine as especially involving the claim to prove by it a primitive religion which they did not invent, but were taught it by their God. See in what a maze of other puzzles he who allows this unhistorical guess-work is now involved, and which I can now only state, without showing how really

insufficient are the probable and plausible answers which may be made to them. Would you not merely aggravate the wildness of conjecture by a theory that mankind first achieved a pure Natural Religion, and then all marched away in the direction of horrible superstitions? Is the Natural Religion you believe in one that of itself produces idolatry, the belief in many gods, silly and obscene ceremonies, etc.? Or how should these come first in the process of evolving such a pure religion? Were they thrown off as the process advanced? (not rather increased?) Did the false produce the true? St. Paul seems to say the reverse of that; but his words will be examined at length in another place. Think of the immense time required for such processes. That indeed rather suits the rejectors of our Holy Scriptures, but is more or less uncomfortable for a Christian who feels under some sort of limit of the history. Those who, like the Brahmins, are entirely free from this, and can deal out their hundreds of thousands of years at discretion, must share with them the suspicion of absurdity. Then there is something very strange in seeing men, not one of whom had ever gone through the master difficulty of this all in the first step from no religious thought at all to any religion, who never knew what it was not to hear something of God (or 'gods')—these insisting that others discovered it, and showing just *how* they did! It is safe to say that this experiment could not be made in a Christian land even with a child whose parents were utterly non-religious or atheists in opinion, and tried to keep the very thought of anything Divine from ever entering the growing mind. The suggestion floating everywhere in the atmosphere of thought, in the careless speech of servants, or of the very atheists themselves, would find a lodgment in that soul. Beyond a doubt the human mind and soul are so constituted that at the very first communication the thought is received and never quite lost. It has as much affinity to each soul as has air to the lungs of the new-born child. And yet if the air were not furnished the child would never breathe.

Much less than this have we now any such actual case as might suggest this account of the beginnings of religion in our race. Let us approach as near as possible to this, and

try to make it imaginable and lifelike by the supposition of a number of children whom no one has taken care to teach religion, and who are yet too young to have caught any hint of it from the speech of others or from reading.<sup>1</sup> Yet we must suppose them old enough to survive if cast together upon an uninhabited island by a shipwreck, in which all the elders of their party perish, or at least die before the children are old enough to learn anything of the kind from them. Have we any reason to think that they—growing to manhood and living a lifetime, in which they are never visited by other human beings,—that they or their descendants, continuing in a like separation from the rest of mankind, would discover or invent any sort of religion?

See with what care the Christian religion provides that we should all be taught its doctrines and duties. What continual reminders there are of it in the ceremonies and instructions, public and private, of the Church; in the divisions of time; in 'this visible frame of things,' which, when we once get the thought, and still more the fixed belief of religion, 'declares the glory of God' to each one. Yet how many are quite irreligious in spite of all this! How many are so merely by the 'lust' or eager desire 'of other things,' contrary to their positive convictions and most serious thoughts! The maintenance of the mere bodily life of themselves and their families seems thus to absorb many, so that they will say, or others will be found to say it for them, that it is unreasonable to expect them to spare time or thought for religion. (Yet we are to suppose that the earlier ages of mankind, when this struggle was universal, and perhaps more engrossing, discovered religion.) Love of enjoyment or ambition in like manner engrosses others; mere indolence others yet, and these in all repress religious thought.

Nor is this confined to a few very dull people, or to the many who are dull by comparison. The better-informed,

<sup>1</sup> Even then, such is the subtle power of heredity, intellectual as well as spiritual, that we could not be sure how much more easy or likely this was for those whose ancestors for at least a hundred continuous generations had had religious thought as some part—some of them it might be a great part—of their actual living, as compared with an order of beings who had never had any such thought.



the more intellectual, the more reading and thinking people may have other engrossing pursuits, which as much exclude religious thought. Could it have been carelessly or inaccurately said of such people by the Great Master of the Christians, that His teachings were rather 'hidden from these σοφοὶ καὶ συνετοί' and more 'revealed unto little children' and other like less reasoning and reading people? We must not empty this saying of all its force because it is annoying to our intellectual pride, or any one's else. And what do we see all about us? Bright, intelligent persons, who are fond of poetry, wit, and philosophy; men with uncommon genius for law, medicine, commerce, or mechanics; great observers of natural processes, very acute in following out these researches, and elegant and eloquent in writing of them for the information of others; masterly astronomers and mathematicians—who are coldly indifferent to the religion they profess, if any; have no time or attention to spare to it from what interests them more. Some of these will discuss questions of religion, but only to disparage its importance and suggest doubts of its beliefs, with all shades of such opinion, from the slighter hints of such doubt on to distinct and theoretic atheism.

This is the fact, no matter how we account for it. And there is nothing so strange in it. Such men *prefer* this to religious thought, just as another prefers good cheer, or vicious indulgence, or money-making, or notoriety. Yet these are all alike far inferior in essential greatness and urgent importance to ourselves, to what tells us about our spiritual needs, our future life, and of all we have personally to do with God. How indeed can intelligent men prefer the others, and even avoid and repel these? We may, if we will, find the clue to this in another profound saying of One quoted just before, that 'men love darkness rather than light,' and why they do. But, in any case, why not accept the fact, and note its bearing upon the question whether primeval men were likely of themselves to give such attention to these matters for ages as to invent religion? For my part, I always regret when good men meet these questions of our day by saying that it is not the 'great men of science' who promote religious doubt, but only the 'shallow pretenders,' etc.

It is true, in one great sense, as Young says, that 'an undevout astronomer is mad.' Who of us can contemplate that amazing glory of space and mass and power, in which any one now can see so much more, and be so much more overwhelmed by its awful greatness than could the lofty soul of the Poet-King, as he sang, 'When I consider Thy heavens'? When 'day unto day uttered this speech' unto each one of us, what insane folly has seized upon any human soul that is not devout?

But what is the fact? Was Laplace one of the 'shallow pretenders' to astronomical science? Yet he was without doubt a thorough atheist. The story runs that when the Emperor Napoleon was looking at the sky once in its greatest splendour of night, and asked his great officers around him who could look at that and not see God in it, Laplace said that he had been searching the sky for forty years, and had never found God there. Was not Mr. Darwin a great man of science? And yet he was to my apprehension as stone-blind to religious truth as any man of them all. To come to my own country, is the editor of the *Popular Science Monthly* one of the 'shallow pretenders'? I owe him small thanks for justice, or even decent civility. Yet he seems to me one of the most intelligent students and agreeable writers of Natural Science.

Nor do I see why some of these gentlemen should look down upon, or, from their point of view, be ashamed of the association with some of the others, *e.g.* those whom Professor Huxley calls 'speculative atheists' (see *Reign of Law*, p. 89, note). Nor do I see why Christians should make much distinction or any between them. The Bishop of Carlisle's tenderness for the sceptic and abhorrence for the atheist do not hang well together. Why may not the one be as honest a doubter, as much to be pitied and to be set right as the other? (*Modern Scepticism*, p. 291.) With loving reverence I say it, I cannot suppose that my God regards the man who admits His 'existence,' but does not accept His Gospel and join the company of His people, with any more favour, if as much, than him who gives his reasons, such as they are, for not believing in Him.

Even we who are endeavouring to keep our religion in

mind are universally far below its privileges and spirit. The sense of this defect (no matter how you may account for that defect) is far the strongest in those who give most thought and take most pains to be all which this requires. Every seventh day, to say nothing of more frequent occasions, interrupts all our other employments, even suspends them, to attend to this. Besides this, every day each one of us makes humble confessions and prayers alone and in secret to our God, with grateful and adoring worship, and renewed vows of love—as well as throughout the day, in the midst of our other avocations, in thought, with almost incessant efforts and aspirations of the same kind. We believe that a gracious Power, vastly superior to all our will, assists these efforts—is indeed the very almighty force of them—and will in some no distant future be entirely victorious over the opposing evil. For some such thing drags powerfully the other way.

Some one may now say: Do you not see that this is proof that your religious thought is all fanciful and unreal, a morbid misdirection of your intelligence; for it is against your nature? We say, No; for we are fully persuaded that what is good and religious is our original and superior nature—that is, as God made us; the other has come in since to disorder that. And the disorder is not merely in an evil will, but also invades and impairs our intelligence when we turn that upon the thoughts of religion. Can we Christians then rationally think that this dulness and weakness of human thought even now, when stimulated by this ideal and absolute truth, would before any such teaching, of its own accord, begin and persist, until it would 'by searching find out God'?

In truth, we Christians have not yet reached the greatest test by which we must try all these opinions. If the Holy Book of our God tells us of Natural Religion, then I am bound to accept it. If its fair meaning is contrary to this (or silent about it), then I am right in rejecting it. But before we enter upon that inquiry, let us see if there be any other questions of the other order undetermined. Does the matter still stand thus in any mind? Religious thought must have had some beginning among men. No other account of it is offered but that of mankind having gained it from Nature.

Therefore that, however improbable it has now been shown to be, is better than none, and is to be retained. But remember that the first condition of this statement is untrue. What is said now is only as an introduction to the careful investigation of another such account by history, and which has none of those improbabilities. Then, too, if we believe in Natural Religion, it must be something consistent with itself, not a confused haze of contradictory notions, in which, when one view is proved false, we unconsciously slip over to a different one, and upon the exposure of that glide back to the first, all the time fancying that we mean one thing by these contradictions. For instance, is not this respectable and traditional Natural Religion to which we hold that of some process by which men's thoughts went from cause to effect, and so on until they reached the thought of an Almighty and Eternal Creator—a very pure if a very bare 'Theism'—and that this One and Only God is the Judge of men as to their right- or wrong-doing, their Rewarder or Punisher—and with this some idea of 'a future state of rewards and punishment'? Then our Natural Religion has nothing whatever to do with the actual state of any people's religion who were without that 'Revealed Religion' which is understood to be in contrast with it. And we must not call in Socrates or Plato as any sort of illustration of it, for they had no idea of its very beginning and introduction to all the rest; of a 'Great First Cause,' One Who is alone eternal and self-existent.

On the other hand, if we are going to find the beginnings of our Natural Religion in a 'Nature-worship,' as the current phrase is now—of many objects of wonder or terror, and all the other horrible and fantastic superstitions of all actual Pagans, savage or civilised—then we must not use the authority of the other sort, of the pure Theism. Any way, *which* of these two theories, each entirely contradictory of the other, do we mean?

And let us be definite about 'Nature,' as to what we mean by the term, and how we suppose that it suggests Religion. 'Nature,' as now commonly used, is a very vague or a very false word, and either way very misleading.<sup>1</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> See *The Reign of God*, not *The Reign of Law*, pp. 24, 123, 125, etc.

I may suppose that in this use it means, either that man's own nature—the way in which he was made first and is born in succeeding generations—conducts him without fail to this discovery ; or that 'Nature' means what used to be called the 'Universe' around men, all that they see and know outside of themselves (or also within, if you will). Is it probable that in either of these senses Nature would have carried mankind on from no thought whatever of such things to the idea of unseen and superior spirits, of spiritual right and wrong, of love and worship, of an eternal life ?

What was shown already on pp. 32-38 is a sufficient answer as to the first supposed sense of the term 'Nature,' and perhaps even for the other. But we will look at that now more in detail. Do we see men in proportion to their thoughts of 'Nature' thronging churches, laying aside everything else in holy time for the services of religion, continuing instant in prayer to God for all spiritual good, mingling grateful adoration of God with all they do ?

It is true enough that a religious man may now make a religious use of all his notices of 'Nature.' We see that often. Our religion tells us to do so. But that does not touch the present question. It would have some bearing upon that if now this appeared to make the less religious man more so ; or rather if it prevented any man, to whom the idea of God had ever come at all, from ever forgetting it, or ever neglecting what he really believed to be true religion. Are men, in fact, so far as we can see, religiously inclined, and given to such thought, just in proportion as they notice 'Nature' ? Is it so with those the very necessity of whose daily toils and cares keeps them in the constant presence and sight of it ?—for instance a field-labourer or a shepherd-boy (unless he is one who carries a Testament in his pocket for leisure reading), or those who are the 'naturalists' by profession, who devote themselves to 'Natural Science,' whether as industrious and patient collectors of the facts, or the brilliant generalisers and theorists and book-makers ? And so with those who 'love Nature' sentimentally, and have the most to say (and, we must suppose, to think) about it poetically. My own judgment of the facts is, that, if there be a difference to observe, it is they who are the least given to Christian

thought. Their special study and their sentiment seems to absorb all their attention and to exclude the other. For the naturalists, the constant and exclusive contemplation of this vast and endlessly varied revolution and regularity tends to blind them to the thought of an Almighty and Eternal Person, Whose Will is the All in All. They are rather impatient of, and incensed at, such an utter contradiction. The wonderful machine is not perfect, as they would have it, unless entirely automatic and independent. And the idea of men being sinners and God their Judge as such, also makes some discord with their theory. So they either repel the thoughts of true religion, or barely listen to them with a cold inattention.

There are indeed devout men among the 'naturalists,' but they are not the representatives—only the exceptions of their class. I have known such men, who were anxious and alarmed at observing the general tendency of physical studies to obscure the thought of God. Indeed, it need not have that result; but it will without special care, just as every place and work in life has its especial dangers to be guarded against.

Suppose we assume the opposite of this, and go to all these devoted students or admirers of 'Nature,' and say: 'You of course are the most devout of men: you think and talk more than any others about God and spiritual things,' would not most of them stare at us with surprise, and then treat this as either very stupid or insulting?

So the profound Jacobi, as the result of his reflection upon these things, cries out: 'Nature is atheistic; it does not reveal—it conceals God' (Sir W. Hamilton, *Works*, iii. p. 424). What real reason have we, then, for thinking that, if men had not been taught religion, they would ever have traced it out by 'Nature'? Why would they have left their dull ploddings for food and shelter, or their careless pursuit of pleasure, their contests of war or trade, or this same intellectual ambition which engrosses our naturalists, to discover what they did not know enough about to have any curiosity?

As a conclusion of fair common sense from these facts, I should have to decide that, if mankind had to arrive at religion in that way, they would never have reached the first

conception of it, much less that elaborate theory which is commonly received as 'Natural Religion.'

Yet there remains a greater question for the Christian scholar. Does the Book of God inform us of Natural Religion? If so, then all apparent improbabilities are of no force. Otherwise they fairly exclude this from reasonable belief. Or, on the other hand, does it expressly or in substance tell us that mankind began to know God and their duty by His immediate teaching? Then that is decisive of the fact.

We cannot fully meet such questions of the Word of God until after just such a careful settling of the true method of understanding the Book as I have placed in the next Chapter, for our use in all that great inquiry which follows. But I must now anticipate it for the present purpose by a brief statement of what is not seldom entirely overlooked in such inquiries, and so the Old Testament is not approached or used in its true sense. This true principle is, that the Holy Bible, with all its great variety of many writings, appearing at long intervals of time, through the lapse of fifteen centuries, is for us *one Book of God*; and also that the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the New Testament, as its voice to us, is our point of view as Christians, as well for the old 'Law and Prophets' as for itself. According to this no man did or could, before the Advent of Our Lord, fully comprehend the Old Testament, as we may now—not the writers of it themselves; not David nor Moses. Still less did the unbelieving Jews then, or have they since. Of course this could not be true of any other sort of writings. In Chapter IV. is set forth with some fulness why this is the Christian's position in reading and understanding, *e.g.* the Book of Genesis. I only state now the express words of Our Lord, that He had come to fulfil the Law; and that he who was least in this new Kingdom of Heaven was greater than John Baptist, than whom none greater had appeared before among men; and His corresponding act in teaching His bewildered and despairing disciples after His Death about the most glorious truths of the Gospel, by 'opening their *understanding* that they might *understand* the (old) Scripture' (St. Luke xxiv. 44). With this, and only with this, also agree

the great arguments of the Epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews, as well as many other things throughout the New Testament.

No one, I suppose, beginning to read the Book of Genesis as a genuine and literal though very brief history, would doubt that it tells that the first of mankind began life with knowing God better than any of us do now. And when we remember to look at it from the point of view of the Gospel, we find that also recognising it simply as just such a history. Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah are referred to as well-known persons. Our Lord Himself speaks of 'the beginning,' and of there being higher morals than even Moses taught. He begins what he would say of the persecution of the men of God by others with '*righteous Abel.*' (Think how much that word meant when *He* used it.)

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have what would be called in any other such writing a 'most masterly and vivid sketch' of the history of true religion for 4000 years. Of the nine great heroes of faith who are there chosen to chiefly represent all the rest, this same Abel is the first. The son of Adam, just after the great disaster of the Fall, appears as making such vast attainments in religion as surely none of us do, except as we have the later Word of God in the Gospel. How could this be if even his father began the first rude and faint attempts to guess at any religion? And yet the notion of Natural Religion really requires many generations and ages.

Adam, though he first had that promise of pardon and redemption, seems rather passed by in this glory of the chief 'elders,' whose *faith* is to be *our* example; perhaps because, he appears most as the representative of how 'sin came into the world, and death by sin.' 'Faith' is one of those few great words often used in the New Testament to represent all our religion and salvation by Jesus Christ Our Lord, and our life in Him (as 'godliness,' 'faith,' and 'love')—as it is so strongly said right after this (Heb. xi. 6) that, 'without faith'—without this penitent, obedient, and loving trust in God—'it is impossible to please Him.' In exact accord with this, St. Paul, in that great argument of his Epistle to the Romans, which is one of the pillars of Christian doctrine, says that



'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Rom. x. 17). And so when we are pointed to Abel at the head of that great line of worthies who shine out with special glory in that unbroken succession of true religion, we are told: 'By *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice,' etc., and 'by it he being dead yet speaketh.' Abraham and Moses have their places in that history, not as the beginning of faith, or as the first receivers of the Word of God, but far down in the line which began with mankind. Let us recall again that designation of Abel by our Lord, as 'righteous Abel.' What a glorious and wonderful adjective from the lips of the Word of God Himself!—and just as He was about to use it again, in His great description of the Judgment: 'Then shall the *righteous* say unto Him,' etc.

'But,' say some Christian writers of great fame and, in some respects, of deservedly high authority for soundness of true doctrine, (and so are constantly repeated by others,) 'St. Paul himself, in the beginning of this very Epistle to the Romans, affirms "Natural Religion."' This, if true, is of great importance. It indeed deserves very careful examination. The passage cited is this (i. 19, etc.): 'Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.'

If any one's mind is already prepossessed with the idea of 'Natural Religion,' this, taken alone, will seem to state it very plainly. Yet that is not, as a matter of course, its genuine meaning, for we shall now see that it readily and naturally enough allows another sense, so that no one who had not already derived this notion from some other source would ever have found it here. We have already had occasion to notice what St. Paul himself thought of the history of the Genesis. He was also a devout believer of all that was written in the Psalms, as, for instance, that all these Pagans were 'the nations that forget God' (Ps. ix. 17), and of what Isaiah and Jeremiah say to the same effect. He himself had written before this that 'the world by

wisdom (*σοφία* or philosophy) *knew not* God,' and had told the Athenians that, with all such religiousness as they had, their own altar to 'the Unknown God' was an unconscious confession that they did not even *know* the One, Only, and True ('whom ye ignorantly,' *i.e.* *ἀγνοοῦντες*, unknowing, 'worship'). He says of such worship elsewhere that in it men 'sacrifice to *demons*, and *not* to God' (1 Cor. x. 20). Yet the brightest of the Greek philosophers, who are always taken as the finest instances of Natural Religion, took part in and commended some of these very superstitions. Either they saw and felt no contradiction between them and their religious ideas; or else—so unlike what our religion requires, and what all its Martyrs have practised—they, from timid, indolent, or mercenary selfishness, basely betrayed the holy truth, and so blasphemed the true God. Either way their 'Natural Religion' was of small account. Recall also that, describing 'faith' (the true knowledge of the Unseen God, knowledge which a man acts upon in true religion), he says expressly that 'faith cometh by ("Nature?" thought? philosophy?—no, by) *hearing* (being *told* this truth), and hearing by the *word* of God.'

Now, remembering that this was St. Paul's belief of the history of true religion, let us begin to read the Epistle to the Romans. Following him through the beautiful, loving salutations of the first verses, we find him telling his personally unknown correspondents how he longs and hopes to see them soon in the great city of their residence—yet not for curiosity, or merely from personal affection to them and the wish to do *them* some good. He has an ardent hope that he may proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ even in great Pagan and Imperial Rome with some of the success he has had elsewhere. Because men live in Rome, their salvation by Jesus Christ Our Lord is none the less desired by him, or any the less is it his duty to do what he can for it. No; nor whether they are Greeks—that is, Pagans—instead of Jews. For all men need this pardon and salvation of God alike, by which the 'righteous shall live by faith.' 'For (vers. 17, 18) therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just (rather, *righteous*) shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven

(made known to them from above, not merely thought out by them) against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who repress the truth in unrighteousness.' Observe how that word 'reveal' is repeated, the second time with the added emphasis, 'from Heaven.' In fact, the word in the New Testament always means what God discloses to men. But this wrathful judgment He would not reveal to the Pagans if, unlike the Jews, they had never known what they owed to Him; if they had had no previous revelation from Him of Himself and true goodness. And had they not? Yes, verily. 'Because (ver. 19) somewhat which may be known of God is manifest among them; for God hath showed it unto them.' Had He not indeed? Having in mind the writer's belief in that literal history of the Genesis as before noticed, we naturally understand him to mean that their very religion, such as it was, contained fragments and traces of that revelation; so did their laws and all their traditional thoughts of justice and virtue. Nor was that all. As we shall soon see, there was something besides provided to remind them always and constantly of these glorious invisible things.

It was true that for each succeeding generation, by the perverseness of their fathers 'visited upon' them, (that great universal mystery and fact of human sin noticed in that Second Commandment, which specially forbids false religion,) the original truth might be more and more lost. But the glorious and gracious One would take all this into account, only judging them by what was left to them of that truth, and by their use of that. The Jews had been favoured with many later revelations, and were judged according to them also. But all men, from the very first, had had something else to remind them of the primitive knowledge of God. 'For (vers. 20-25) the invisible things of Him (that is, His Eternal Power and Godhead) from the very creation of the world (the beginning of our race) are seen into, being thought of (or kept in mind) through the things made, so that they are (or may be) inexcusable. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave Him thanks; but they became silly in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Profess-

ing themselves to be wise (or philosophic), they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, . . . who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped the creation instead of the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.' Then follows (vers. 26-32) that terrible description of the moral degradation which ensued among all the heathen people upon their 'changing the truth of God,' that greatest of all truth, true religion, 'into a lie,' that most dreadful of lies, false religion.

Surely this is an account of all men (except those who had received the Word of God, which came by later revelation) through all the ages until then: not merely of Greek philosophers, or a very few men wiser than all the rest; and not excepting such men either. And surely this does not describe a slow advancing and improving process of thought, by which men rose from no idea of God, or of anything divine or spiritual, to a clear knowledge of 'His Eternal Power and Godhead.' On the contrary, it is all the history of a great and terrible descent, from a time when 'they knew God,' and also were continually reminded of Him, though invisible, by His works—down from this glorious light to great darkness of false religion. Yet in that these later generations are in some degree responsible and not innocent before Him.

Why should we put another meaning upon the writer to contradict what he plainly implies elsewhere? Is it because Plato says some fine things superior to the popular religion of his time, and so must have got these thoughts from 'Natural Religion'? But it is precisely the 'Eternal Power and Godhead' which Plato and all these other men did *not* see, even if we will not consider that all their better thoughts at least *may* be traces of the original Revelation.

Let us apply another test, and stating this supposed Natural Religion at its best, adjust it to the words of St. Paul. For 'the being of God,' 'a future state,' and 'the supremacy of conscience' were discovered by these other races of men. They had nothing to do with the history of mankind from Adam and Abel, or with any faith which

comes by hearing: theirs was *knowledge* which comes by *seeing*. Seeing sun, stars, and seasons, they who had never heard or been told of such a Person, came to have a clear understanding of the Eternal, Holy, and Almighty Creator, and the true worship of Him. But this now long-past generation then went on by further thought to pervert their discovery, and to utterly lose all this knowledge, in a false religion, which we find now among their descendants. Yet what would this have to do with the guilt of that generation of Pagans with whom the writer actually had to do, or with any since? 'so that they are without excuse.' Or did he mean that these people of his time had thus learned a true 'Natural Religion, from beholding the things that are made,' and then all turned round and changed this 'glory of the incorruptible God' into the silliest idolatries and most immoral superstitions?

We hardly need inquire whether there can be any sort of agreement between these words of St. Paul and such a Natural Religion as supposes that there was a slow ascent at first by 'Nature-worship' of everything great, strange, powerful, or terrible, to the thought of many personal gods, and then of one such Person.

The more we bring this sort of interpretation of St. Paul under clear inspection, and try it thus by practical tests, do its inconsistencies and difficulties increase. Why, then, not take it in its natural agreement with the history of Genesis? That relates: 'So God created man in His Own image (with an impressive majesty of iteration), in the image of God created He him.' It has long been to me very clear that this spiritual excellence of mankind, as made in the Maker's Own image, is a capacity of spiritual and intelligent love, especially toward God Himself, including in this personality and free will. Then it goes on to say that 'God *blessed*' the first man and woman, and 'God *said* unto them,' etc. 'And the Lord God *commanded* the man, *saying*,' etc. Even when they had been tempted and sinned, 'He *said*' unto their terrible tempter and to them, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' And so St. Paul, at the end of this very Epistle

to the Romans, as an inspired prophet of God, says to them : 'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' Thus this first knowledge of God was continued through the following generations, with much pure worship where there continued to be some penitent faith to inspire it ; while, with those who 'glorified Him not,' it was soon almost entirely lost in the change of false worship and vile unrighteousness. In precise accordance with this we have the greatest abstract thinker among the writers of Holy Scripture saying (Eccles. vii. 29), 'God hath made man (in the original, more precisely, *Adam*) upright, but they have sought out many inventions.'

If with some persons this is still 'inconceivable,' because, as they will say, 'mankind had at first no language, and so could not literally understand something said to them,' let them consider that this is simply begging the whole question in advance. You would think it very absurd in a man to say that Our Lord could not have risen from the dead because no man ever did ; and so reject the abundant proof upon which we all ought to believe that. Are not you now saying that God did not speak to men and they understand Him, because—they did not ?

What, indeed, must be the entanglement of that intelligent mind (and I know that there are such) which cannot fairly consider the proof of a fact because 'it is impossible that men could have been created with the ability at once to use words, and to understand them when spoken by another' ? (Or do they really mean that it was 'impossible' for the Almighty God to produce the sounds of a human voice, such as we could hear ?) This is a curious fact, showing the tenacious hold of the mere notion of a 'Natural Religion,' or the vast power of the new current of unbelieving thought, bearing along with it many unconscious minds. It is closely allied to the assumption (or a part of it) that, because human life, in all its generations after, begins with utter, speechless helplessness, therefore it must have been so at the very first. But how absurd this is ! The infant thus created would at once have perished, and left no successors. The present order can give us no reasonable suggestion of that kind. For that supposes the mature parents already existing for

the process of generation, so that in this we have to begin with the grown man.

Then, too, the full-grown man and woman, who can neither utter a word nor understand one they hear, is an altogether unworthy idea of our race, as 'created in the image of God.' The infant child is natural enough, because we connect its life with the mature life of its parents. But to fancy the first man Adam made a living soul, as a huge infant, without speech (or thought, for the two are really inseparable), is a most unnatural absurdity. *Impossible*, indeed, to believe that God could (or would) give language to this glorious creature, the crown and king of all his fellow-creatures upon earth, when He even makes every little brood of chicks at once express their desires and understand their mothers' calls. Indeed, some of the greatest seekers after truth among men<sup>1</sup> have been convinced, upon grounds independent of this, that a language must have been given to men with their creation, as much immediately and directly as the power of moving from place to place. (See later, Chapter V.) Nothing true that has since been discovered as to the growth and changes of existing languages affects this at all.

Perhaps the doubt takes this form of suggesting that these first pages of history are an 'allegory,' and therefore are not authority as to facts. We will all agree that the Genesis is not, like the *Pilgrim's Progress*, merely an 'allegory,' but that somewhere in it literal history does begin. How, then, do we distinguish any part of it as allegorical? Naturally, history would not *begin* with that, but it might afterward appear incidentally, as the illustration used by some man of what he would teach others. There are such brief allegories in the Scripture history. These all appear plainly enough upon their face to be such. But the account of the first man is not so introduced. It is not so recognised or treated elsewhere in the Book. It is a simple beginning of what goes on afterwards as an acknowledged and continuous history. There are in other ancient books stories, which are rightly enough called fables or myths, in which

<sup>1</sup> Hobbes, Archbishop Stillingfleet, Buxtorf, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Beattie, Archbishop Magee, Dr. Ellis, etc. etc.

a poetic mind has dressed up some tradition or doctrine in evident fiction. But any reverence for this as the book of God, or any just sense of its method, so full of the sobriety and simplicity of strict truth, will forbid our classing it with them.

Without doubt, this history of the greatest things, compressed within three or four pages, and involving the greatest mysteries of all human life, is in itself unlike any other story. There may yet be disclosed to us in it—we may reasonably expect there will—very much more, which escapes us all now. To make this notion of an allegory an occasion for rejecting the plain meaning, and with wild and weak guesses make of it whatever we fancy, would be the worst mistake of all. It would in the end destroy all faith and reverence; and these surely are of the first consequence. Let us be content to accept the history just as it is told, and as the Word of God in person Himself used it.

Or even suppose we could reasonably believe this to be an allegory, what truth does this allegory teach us? Can we think that it has been telling mankind for all these ages that their first forefathers discovered, by a slow process of their own thoughts and gradual invention of many generations, how to use words in speech, and how to understand others when they heard them speak? Does it read so naturally now? Did any one ever really observe this meaning in it? For my own part, it seems very clear that I would never have learned from this 'allegory,' if it be one, that language was not at first given to man as much as his senses; but just the contrary, that it was so given. And what, then, does the 'allegory' teach us all? Something, surely. If we believe it to be what God has said for many ages to mankind, for the instruction of our race (and it is only with Christians, and as to the Christian view of these matters, that the inquiry is made), then, if we prefer to say that it is such instruction in the form of an allegory, we are bound to give a reasonable account of what truth it has thus been plainly teaching men through all these generations. I now partly anticipate a later inquiry, and yet it is well to try and put into definite words what the allegory must then be supposed to teach. Thus:—



'So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God created He him. And God blessed them, and God said unto them,' etc. (Gen. i. 27, 28.) That is, man had no more of the present power of utterance or comprehension of words, if he should hear them, than the brutes have now (or a new-born child); or God was not able to cause sounds such as are now made by the human voice to be heard. Nor could a man learn it, as a child does now, by hearing and imitation, for as yet there was no person who could make such sounds. Then, forced by their necessities, with very long observance and imitation of the cries of animals, etc., they found out a method of vocal sounds, at first little above these cries of the other animals, but, improving upon this slowly through many thousands of years, it became at last human language.

'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,' etc., 'and brought them (the other living creatures) unto Adam, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof' (Gen. ii. 16, 17, 19). Here also the allegory has been teaching mankind for some thousands of years that they began life without any words, just like the other dumb brutes, as we now call them. The full-grown man and woman were, indeed, as regards this, much worse off than an infant of a day old is now, for not only was there no one to take care of them in their dumb ignorance, but no one to teach them language as time advanced, or even any language to learn, until their remote descendants should invent it.

This is not caricature, nor is it derision. Surely, if it is assumed that man had no language at first, and that *therefore* God could not tell him anything in words—and yet this does not contradict the story of Genesis, because that is an allegory,—then the allegory must teach this, or what is consistent with it. Any way, it ought to be plain enough to us all what the allegory does teach. For my own part, I altogether prefer, as the more reasonable and natural understanding of the account in question, to take it as a true history, virtually informing us, among other things, that God provided man with a language as being as much a part of the complete human nature as locomotion or under-

standing ; that God did speak to Adam—at least as directly as He did to Moses ; and that Adam both understood the words, and was able to use words in response, of obedience and love to His Maker, and of society with his wife.

To say the least, the notion of such an allegory, and that St. Paul accepted this history in that sense, is so far from probable and reasonable, that I need not use it in understanding his meaning in this account of the Beginnings of Religion. Or rather, recurring to the greatest fact before us, I need not so read what here the 'Holy Ghost teacheth.'

The whole theory of Natural Religion is of no such authority, in any sense, as to forbid being questioned, or to bar the way to inquiry which does not accord with it. It is not 'one of the Articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed.' It is not in form or substance in any Symbol, Articles, or Confession of Faith, or any Liturgy or book of authority of any body of Christians that I ever knew of.

It is of interest and use to trace, as far as possible, its origin—more especially, how it came among Christians. Some persons, in fact, will not be able entirely to rid themselves of the prepossession, unless they can, in a measure, understand how it has been so entirely taken up by certain of the great defenders of Christian truth, as though it were an agreed part of that truth ; and so entirely followed by others since.

By those who had not our Divine account of the first ages of man—for example, by some of the great Greek philosophers,—religion was conjectured to be one of his inventions, from his study of 'Nature' and of his own thoughts. The first favourable allusion by a Christian writer to 'philosophy,' as applied to religion (St. Paul had mentioned it two generations before, but with very strong disapproval), we find in Justin Martyr. Clement of Alexandria and Origen carry it much further. But the best account we could give of their intentions in this cannot acquit them of a great mistake. There will always be a tendency in those who are fond of studies other than those of religion—good as any such may be in their place—to treat the truth which we

receive directly from God in the same way. They wish to arrange it also in a method ; to 'co-ordinate the facts ;' to 'give it a scientific form.' This is all very well for human discoveries, but unsafe and misleading as to what we know only by God's words to us. We cannot 'co-ordinate' the human and the Divine ; that is, some mystery or transcendent truth which God gives to our faith, and our reasoning from this, or personal application of it ; for they are not of the same *ordo*. Even less can we wisely undertake to re-arrange all these Divine things in some method of ours. For it is of their essence to be simply accepted by us as given. So in those early ages, from Origen down, the effect was to obscure the heavenly truth, and to confuse it with human errors. The same thing occurred in the Middle Ages with the writings of the Schoolmen ; and in Aquinas, the greatest of them all, we find 'Natural Religion' largely and positively affirmed. (See *Sum. Theol.*) After the Reformation some of the philosophising theologians gave it a large place ; even one of our very greatest and wisest divines (a careful examination of the first and fifth books of the *Eccles. Pol.* with reference to this would be useful). Archbishop Tillotson, and those of his school, went yet further in the same direction. And then the 'Deists' found it altogether to their purpose. Thus later Christian writers employed a great part of their work in trying to frame answers to the puzzles and doubts about the truth of God which Bolingbroke and Hume argued from this very 'Natural Religion.' Those Christian apologies were successful only just in proportion as they had left the ground of 'Natural Religion.' But they seem seldom to have seen clearly that to allow it at all was a wrong done to truth and to the Word of God.

Some indeed laid hold of it, with a timid eagerness to secure the help of 'Philosophy' for Religion : as much as possible to avoid mysteries and to exalt reason ; to propitiate, to conciliate, to attract the more intelligent. Some were afraid that otherwise they, too, would be accounted among the 'blind,' the 'narrow,' the 'bigoted,' instead of being simply resolute to find and to defend truth, no matter what names they might be called. But what counted more in this direction than perhaps anything else was the notion that

only thus could any sincere piety or any traces whatsoever of real religion be accounted for before the Advent of our Lord in any men outside of the race of Abraham. To this contributed the recoil in some minds from the harsh judgment of some other zealous Christians, that all these 'nations' were surely 'turned into hell' for lack of that Word of God, which had been given only to the small people of Israel. We shall soon see how all these difficulties are met, at least as well, by the idea of a primitive Revelation.

In our day this prepossession is reinforced by a tendency of thought, of which Hooker and Butler, and even our grandfathers, knew nothing, and which is represented by the word 'Evolution.' This may bar the way in the minds of some of my readers to following with freedom and candour the investigation which follows. It is the belief that our age has been forced by an irresistible evolution of thought to bring forth an idea, which, in its turn, nothing else can resist: namely, that all things which exist (and thus including all beliefs and institutions, as well as worlds and souls) are the product of an immense evolving and progressive force, to the beginning point of which no knowledge can attain, or our knowledge ever more than conjecture the duration of its processes, even less place any limit of future evolution. If any one's mind is really under the spell of such a persuasion, it is indeed in no condition to entertain the historical proof of something which is in no sense an evolution. Such a mind will find the theory of 'Natural Religion' far more congenial, and quite reducible under its favourite necessity of belief.

But is that a wise and fair and free condition for an investigating mind? It certainly is not, according to the Christian conditions of thinking, which we are now undertaking, at least by way of hypothetical reasoning, to follow faithfully, while we try a certain proposed solution of the facts of History as to Religion. This Christian method involves the 'glorious liberty' of men, as 'the sons of God,' to believe whatever is most to His glory, as it has been made known to them by His verbal communication. Let us all refuse to accept this overwhelming constraint of believing in superior, resistless 'evolution,' even in its more religious form of assuming that this is the invariable way in which God

does all that He does—for this occasion at least, and until we have given a fair trial to this research of *facts*.

Even a 'blind bigotry' in behalf of the theory of universal 'evolution,' which would compel all facts to be adjusted to it, and so require that man shall appear as slowly unfolding from lower thought to the highest yet known, cannot upon its own assumptions entirely exclude our argument until it has shown that the imagined 'evolution' did not take place before the scenes of Eden. Let us then proceed to try the whole question by the Divine History. If that gives explicit information that the spiritual nature of man, his capacity, and supreme purpose of loving God and his neighbour, did not begin with the first man, but was to be developed in succeeding generations, then all the proof or probability already shown gives way. If, on the contrary, in its fair sense it tells of a primitive Revelation, let that be allowed as the Christian truth.

The notion of a Natural Religion cannot even be rightly named a human invention. It is not something real and true, though inferior:—not 'revealed,' but left to the human intelligence to find out by its own processes. It is a fiction, a false imagination; as Magee quotes some one as describing it (*On Atonement and Sacrifice*, ii. p. 36) 'a mere *ens rationis*,' having no existence in fact, but only in the mind which entertains it. It may be assumed, and repeated with unquestioning positiveness a thousand times, and occupy a large space in some arguments of 'Christian Evidences' which are otherwise very valuable. Yet none the less it is at the utmost only a huge house of cards. At the first touch of opposing *fact* it tumbles into formless ruin.

It cannot even be rightly called an 'idea,' if we mean by that, as the present common use is, some thought of ours which represents some existing thing. Nor is it the metaphysical 'idea' of Plato and his followers, but the exact opposite—as corresponding to nothing existing: without suggestion from or connection with history or any present experience; much less is it the original and reality of any fact. Here, curiously enough, the Platonic philosophy, in which in some measure it has its origin and continuance, will furnish us with another refutation, as well as of this

very theory of 'ideas.' For if it be a true idea in this sense, the first and essential part of it is the thought of a Creator. We are told that man *sees* and *thinks*, and in the process of this necessary thought of *cause* he comes to know that there must be a Great First Cause—that is, GOD; and here is the foundation of all Religion.

But this is just what the acute Plato and all the philosophical Pagans who are instanced as having a Natural Religion—Egyptians, Persians, Indians, Chinese—never did think. The Hebrew Scriptures were through all those ages the only repository of the thought that there is an Eternal, Self-Existent Person Who by His Will made all else. The most profound thought of all the others begins with an eternal frame of things, in the midst of which sits a sort of All-Powerful, who, after all, is himself only a part of this *To-Pan*. So Plato's 'ideas' have no right place in Christian thought. They are a sort of necessity of his notions. *They* are the *Eternal*, and account after that fashion for all that exists, without a real *Creator*. This or that thing appears to exist now, because there always was this eternal idea which various individuals of it now display to our eyes.

In fact, Plato's 'ideas' are not at all what any one now means in the ordinary use of that word, unless, as a philosopher, he tries to keep this notion in his mind, and to write or speak according to it. I shall sometimes use the word, but always in the obvious and popular sense, as, *e.g.*, the 'idea' of Religion means any thought of worship or of a Divine Person. So one great question before us now is whether this idea, once communicated to a man, would not be transmitted from generation to generation, and, however debased and encumbered, never quite lost in any but an idiot or an irresponsible person.

Far the most safe and reasonable ground in our study of the Sacred History is to read it simply, as our Lord and St. Paul did, as a clear and direct narrative of such facts as it does recount, and to leave any deeper mysteries in it among 'the secret things which belong unto God,' to be disclosed to us by Him if and when and as He will choose. If He tells us of any such mystery, then of course we are to receive it.

The assumption of a 'Natural Religion' as a part of

Christian truth is, as I have intimated, with most persons rather a 'prepossession' than a belief. But that it is not only in the way of a fair judgment of the matter in hand, but also very general, I find shown in a remarkable and recent case. A writer so deservedly popular as Dr. Geikie, and who has no sympathies with unbelief—indeed himself recognising (yet in the imperfect and neglectful way which prevails) the primitive Revelation (see *Hours with the Bible*, i. p. 115)—yet soon after (p. 304) speaks of certain Pagans of Chaldæa in the time of Abraham, 'who until then had followed a simple and primitive Nature-worship' and of their 'local divinities.' In what sense could he think this to be 'simple and primitive'? Was such a 'departing from the Living God' more 'simple and primitive' than Adam's or Noah's knowledge of Him? Or, excusing the careless use of the first adjective, as meant to distinguish from some later elaborate idolatry, how was it 'primitive'? The writer has evidently, though unconsciously, slipped from his earlier glimpse of the true primitive religion to the vague fiction of an invention and development of 'Natural Religion.'

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TRUE PRINCIPLES AND METHOD TO BE FOLLOWED WITH THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IN THIS INVESTIGATION.

OUR research is therefore now to be in History, as supplied by the books of Moses, upon the Christian hypothesis that the Holy Bible differs from all other writings in being 'the Word of God' to mankind. We need therefore to make sure what this fairly implies, and to use the writings in question intelligently and consistently upon that method. There is a great deal of confusion of thought about this now prevailing, and unperceived mistakes, which, if we do not see and carefully avoid at the outset, will obscure our sight of the facts, turn us aside from the right road of History, and quite impair the value of our results. This chapter will therefore be devoted to examining and fixing the reasonable Christian method of understanding the Old Testament. If some one says, Why not read the book simply as it literally reads?—I would say, Most willingly; most wisely, if the words are at once accepted by the reader as true. But every one does not do this as a matter of course. Witness the notion already noticed of all the first of the Genesis being an allegory. And to do this is not as simple a matter as it sounds at first. Consider that most mighty agreed fact of these writings being, in a manner peculiar to them, 'the Word of God;' that as such they have a great common purpose; that this purpose is not fully disclosed, except in that part of them which is of latest date, written as long after the first as it is now since Constantine was Emperor of Rome, and more than three times as long after the first historical facts; that it was written in a language not only foreign to us, but not exist-



ing for now twenty-five centuries as the living mother-tongue of any people—amid scenes and habits of which nothing we are now familiar with gives any idea. These things alone suggest that it is but common sense for us to see that we need helps in a fair reading of these writings such as are not necessary for any book of our own language and time.

For one thing, in examining any ancient document, it is but good sense to get what suggestions we can about it from later writings connected with it; to look sharply into them for whatever helps us to understand its terms or the intention of its author. But that is far below the case before us. We know distinctly from the highest authority that the writings of Moses cannot be really understood except according to events and revelations made fifteen centuries after him; that, in fact, they never were so understood before that later time, and even then only by those who with all their hearts accepted the doctrines of the Gospel. Of course much of the Old Testament was plain enough for its immediate purpose to all who heard or read it in the literal words. But for certain other future purposes, which were much the highest, and therefore necessary to any thorough understanding, they were not comprehended. Yet we are now precisely engaged in researches of these later and highest matters, and we live in the age of those complete revelations. It was right enough for the Hebrews of Moses' or of Ezra's days to take it merely as they did, but it would be absurd for Christians not to look at it from their point of advantage.

Nothing can be plainer than what St. Paul tells us of the writings of Moses being only the 'shadow of good things to come,'—those chief truths which Our Lord Jesus Christ, 'the Son of God' and 'the Word of God,' came to disclose, and which we now have in the New Testament. Those earlier Scriptures were now shown to have a new, higher, and yet original meaning, which had been held in abeyance in the former ages from all men (including their very writers). Thus even Moses never knew the full force of words which he wrote by inspiration of God. What would we think if, when the full explanation and purpose of some old writing of another sort were now first known, some one should take no notice of this, and treat the now explained words as still

standing by themselves, and having no connection with this true key to them? Even if as to some inferior particulars they seemed to have an evident sense apart from that, it would be but a wise caution to make ourselves more sure of this by recurring to that chief idea and trying all again by that. If the very matters under consideration were those of very considerable—of the very *first*—consequence, it would then be a great mistake to neglect this, making it almost certain that we would miss the true meaning of the words before us.

Nor does this which St. Paul tells us of the Old Testament as a 'shadow' of the truth, only to be fully understood by means of the Gospel, apply only to the ceremonies and civil laws of the Hebrew dispensation. It includes the religion and the history of all mankind, the very matters now before us. So he very plainly and forcibly teaches, as before quoted, and in the substance of the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews. And so he shows Our Lord to us as 'the last Adam,' carrying Him and His salvation back to the first of our race, as St. John shows Him to us as the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' Thus all true religion and all spiritual life are essentially Christian, and can be understood only through the Gospel. One of the most striking of all St. Paul's illustrations of this is in the Epistle to the Galatians,<sup>1</sup> where he tells us that the story of Isaac and Ishmael, the two sons of Abraham, is an 'allegory,' or rather that these events, real as they were, are *ἀλληγορούμενα*, have another and higher meaning than the mere narrative. This is not a fine device of human rhetoric, using the ancient history as an illustration or ornament of the writer's argument. It is that voice of Divine prophecy (prophecy in its primary and highest sense; not merely foretelling, but *speaking for God* by inspiration), revealing to us how all other history was by the power and Will of God to introduce His greatest purpose in all events—that is, the redemption of men by Our Lord. So that while Moses knows and relates only the actual story of Isaac and Ishmael, it was not until the New Covenant or 'Testament' of the Gospel came to supersede the Old, that men could know the chief meaning of these events as a figure and prophecy of that.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 21-24.

Observe, too, that this goes far back of the mere 'law of Moses' both in time and scope.

Yet even St. Paul, as 'moved by the Holy Ghost,' cannot be our chief authority for this. He, with the joy of loving humility, stands aside when that voice is heard, to which he once replied for us all, 'Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?' (or to think.)

In many places of the Gospel HE tells us this, as when in St. John v. 39 He bids all the Jews 'search the scriptures (of the Old Testament), for they are they which testify of Me'; 'If ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me' (ver. 46). Yet no one did then, or does now, at first, or unless informed by Our Lord, and thus given the key of the whole, see this chief meaning of the books of Moses. Even to His own loving followers He did not fully disclose it until after His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, which events also were a part of the explanation. As we read in St. Luke xxiv. 25-27, 'Then He said unto them, O foolish, and slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken: . . . and beginning at *Moses* and *all* the prophets, He expounded unto them in *all* the scriptures the things concerning Himself.' In this wonderful passage we see that none but those whom He teaches can understand 'Moses and *all* the prophets,' and 'all the scriptures' (that is, the whole Old Testament); that even *their* danger is not of believing too much, but, on the contrary, of not believing enough of this. Accordingly, those Old as well as the New Scriptures now really belong to and are comprehended only by the Church of Christ. And so St. Paul declares at Rome (Acts xxviii. 25-28), as elsewhere in substance, that the Word of God has departed from the Jews as a people, and solemnly takes up against them all that sentence of the prophets with which Our Lord had warned them before the great Sacrifice was made, 'Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand,' etc. To the same effect in all his own writings he regards all that history which went before as but the shadow of which the Gospel is the substance; as in the great instance already cited of teaching us that Our Lord is the 'last Adam,' Who restores mankind to the innocence they lost in the first, and raises them to even greater future glory in that Redemption.

Thus no Christian scholar can now intelligently explore the Old Testament, except from this point of view ; otherwise he will certainly miss some of its truth, and probably get very far astray. To follow such a history as that in the mere order of time would be to mistake appearance for reality. It is our great advantage in this, which no other history can offer, to look at all that has passed from 'the fulness of time'—and this not as any deduction or ingenious conjecture of ours, but by certain information of one who does know. We are placed by the Mighty Lord and Master of it all at a point where we see what He was doing in all this, as its contemporary men could not.

In the New Testament (yet in substance also in the Old, though not so plainly) we are most clearly taught what is the wise temper of mind (no small matter for finding truth), in which we should seek knowledge about religion. It is with a penitent humility toward God and a supreme love of God. Observe that it is not merely the humility of inferiors and dependants, but of those who are under the just displeasure of their Superior, and desire above all things His merciful forgiveness, His teaching as to this, and His immediate help both to will and to do right. This is a part of the essential attitude of the Christian learner toward all this teaching ; in this entirely unlike other research. And to love God above all else is another like part of it, so that we will not 'seek first,' in this search of truth, our own glory as discoverers of the truth, or even truth for its own sake, as this is sometimes stated, or for an acquisition independent of Him ; but with a love which forgets all else in the love of Him, and does 'all for the glory of God.' How different this is from the ambition, which is often one great incentive in other research, if not really the most effective one ! How positively contrary it is to the spirit which would rather be employed in seeking truth imperfectly by its own exertion of thought, than receive it from another perfectly, is very plain. Whatever any one may think of the comparative dignity or delight of the two methods, this of penitent humility and obedient love is undoubtedly that of the Gospel. As we have proposed that method in the inquiry that follows, we have no more right to suppress or deviate

from this part of it than from any other. In that case we should do both it and ourselves injustice, and deprive our results of all value.

By the same authority and example we also learn from whom, as Christians, we are to receive the Holy Book. Our Master accepted it simply and entirely as preserved in Israel. He set up no critical judgment of its evidence or of its contents; He assumed no discrimination as to its different parts being more or less worthy of religious faith. If there was ever any man who might do this, He was the very one. And in that case He would have been sure to mark for us the chief truth, and point us the way to such investigation. That He did not was from no timidity or politic caution as to wounding the prejudice of people, from which we are safe. He spoke with the greatest plainness and severity as to the personal conduct of priests, scribes, and people alike; and this is the most dangerous provocation of men. Nor did He make great *professions* of reverence for the Holy Writings, as such policy would have done. He simply and reverently accepted them as the 'Word of God,' and used them as such. He treated 'the commonwealth of Israel,' as it then existed, as 'the witness and keeper of Holy Writ.' He well knew the jealous care exercised by those responsible persons who had had charge of this through all the former generations—their all but superstitious scruples to set down every letter and mark of the older copies. He did not censure or ridicule this. He gave His sanction to their authority for this in words as well as by example in saying, at the close of His ministry, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat,' etc. (St. Matt. xxiii. 2), just as at the beginning of that ministry He had proclaimed (St. Matt. v. 17, 18), 'Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot* or *one tittle* shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I cannot doubt, upon a careful study of these passages, that I state the force of Our Lord's words as quoted, at least as to the scribes, who had that name from this work of copying the Holy Scriptures, and carefully numbering its words and letters. As in both instances He condemns with awful severity what these men taught beyond and against Holy Writ, we must suppose that He enjoined obedience to them only as keepers and witnesses of that Word of

In all this reception of Holy Scripture entire from its human keepers by Our Lord, He is our best pattern, as the one Man Who perfectly loved God and believed His Word. By this He says to us in effect, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,' as He also prayed for us to the Father, 'Sanctify them by Thy truth: Thy word (and this Book is specially God's word to His people now) is truth.' Following Him in this, we receive that even greater Scripture, which includes also His words and history, in the Gospels, and 'what the Spirit saith unto the Churches' by His Apostles in the rest of the New Testament.

That great society, 'the Church, which is His body,' whatever theory we may have of its constitution, or impressions as to the details of its history since, is to us the 'Witness and Keeper of Holy Writ.' In this He is with it 'to the end of the world.' Nowhere is the fact about this stated more wisely than in the sixth Article (of the Thirty-nine) as to the 'books' or various writings which make up the Holy Bible—that they are those 'of whose authority there was never any doubt in the Church.' Just so would a devout Israelite of Our Lord's day have wisely answered one who asked of him, 'How do you know that this or that writing of a prophet is a part of the Holy Book?' 'There was never any doubt of that in Israel through the ages since.' Such a receiving by His people of God's Word written, does not depend upon this record of the Sanhedrim or that decree of a Council, but that consent of all the holy people, of which consent God Himself, in His care of them, is the real author. As with 'the Man Christ Jesus,' this was not His faith in those 'scribes and priests,' whose faults none knew so well as He, but in the God of Israel, Who would have His Word preserved pure for them, and still more for us, 'upon whom the ends of the world are come.' So *we* also trust Him that 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose' in His Church, (the 'called out,') by the safe keeping of that precious Holy Scripture of both Testaments. This is a wise, safe, and certain part of our faith in God. It is not at all affected

God. In any case He gives His sanction to all that part of their work, and to the very text they used.

by our finding a trifling misprint in some copy of the Bible now, nor by the (very few and unimportant) differences in the oldest manuscript copies we have, in which there is some room for differing opinions without impairing reverence or faith. We have ample proof that the same thing existed in the days of Our Lord and His Apostles, in the discrepancy between the Greek translation (LXX.), from which they very often quoted, and the old Hebrew writings, as well as these last among themselves. But all attention is given to the sacred truth of God, none to the trifling errors of the copyist. They had too great a sense of that truth, and too much faith in God, to waste their thoughts upon cavilling, doubting, or even hesitating over such objections, though these writings had come to them through the prevailing hypocrisy of priests, rulers, and people, after the Captivity, as Malachi relates it; or through the selfish vanity and harsh arrogance of even the zealots of the law in the time of the Maccabees; or still more that iniquity of His Own age, against which were denounced the awful woes in the Gospel. There was no war of conjectures and arguments as to which parchment roll was written first. There was a general *textus receptus*, to which all assented with devout common sense. No one thought of 'searching the Scriptures' in a way to cast doubt over them, or to destroy their powerful influence with men. It was not then that disparaging contrasts were made between 'truth' and the Scriptures, as 'a mere literary record' of that truth; or that the accepted belief for the past ages as to the human authors of these different writings, or of the times of their composition, was called in question by 'critical' ingenuity. Yet then, if ever, was the very time and occasion for that. If those were superstitions or errors of any sort, then was the time, and these were the men, for their correction. On the contrary, all they said went to confirm reverence and obedience. Especially what Our Lord (Whose is the supreme example in all this) blames in the formal and superstitious Jews of His time, is not their reverence for the very letter, and minute observance of it as Divine, but just the opposite of this—their departure from it after their own contrivances. Further than this, His recognising any one as the writer of what He cites (or any of the New Testament writers who do this) is

final authority which *Christian* criticism cannot call in question. Thus to say the least, any new reading or new sense of an old reading, different from what has been generally received in the Church heretofore, has a presumption against it, which must be overcome by very strong positive proof. We shall be far less liable to foolish doubts and waverings which will obscure the truth of God to our minds if we keep in mind that we are very safe as to the main accuracy of this Word of God to us, since it is not a matter for each one's guesswork, or for any one's most anxious research, but comes to us far more safely from the guardianship of those whom God has put in charge of it. This Divine keeping of the Book of God by the Church of God has been shown in a very wonderful way when some erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to that Word have prevailed in that Church. No fact of all the wonders of Israel is more striking than that they should have so carefully preserved a book which does not at all flatter them as a people, but, on the contrary, gives the most severely humiliating account of them that can be found in the annals of any nation. (Compare this with the boastful Egyptian and Assyrian records lately deciphered, and which are so much admired.) But as wonderful, if not even more so, is the safe keeping of the New Testament by the Church of the Middle Ages, its reverent preservation still among those who persist in those errors which the great Reformation of the sixteenth century cast out from belief and practice in so large a part of Christendom simply by appealing to the plain words of those Holy Scriptures. That the Gospels and Epistles should have been for many such ages carefully kept and copied, with all reverence and acknowledgment of their Divine authority—kept thus to bring the Church back to the truth,—is a fact of the first magnitude. It is exactly as Our Lord did not have occasion to accuse or to suspect those blind scribes of not being faithful keepers of that Holy Writ. He accepted and approved it from their hands as pure, and from it He exposed their false teachings, and showed how all of God's Word before was a true introduction and prophecy of the Gospel. Exactly so His Apostles accepted and used it. We as Christians are to follow in their steps.



And thus we receive it as the Church has delivered it to us, made up of the two Testaments and many different writers and writings, yet as one book, a consistent whole, of which the various parts assist in explaining one another, the Gospel, as we have already seen, being the main point of view of the whole. The very word Bible ('book') has attested this for now at least 1400 years. But the *idea* of all these Scriptures being but parts of one perfect Book of God is very much older than that word, as is evident in all the earlier Christian writings, and this whether the term used was 'Scripture' (*γραφῆ*) or 'Scriptures' (*γραφαί*), just as now either one of these expressions is with us equivalent to 'the Bible' or 'Book.'

When we resort again to the New Testament we find nothing but what accords with this; in fact, the longer and more carefully we look at all passages which bear upon this matter, the more plainly they imply the same thing. Just as all that belongs to the human authorship (the thirty or forty different writers, the sixty-six different writings, the thirty or forty different generations, the different governments, migrations, conquests, captivities, hostile religions, persecutions)—as all these remind us of the various books, so the Divine authorship always recognised reminds us that this is, after all, the one Book, with the one consistent purpose of its whole, without attending to which we cannot even well see the real meaning of any part.

This is so throughout all Our Lord's sayings, though He sometimes spoke of 'this scripture' to mean some one passage; yet in other such, as in St. John vii. 38, 'as the Scripture saith,' etc., meaning the Divine Writings as a whole. But He usually, if not invariably, thus applies the plural word 'Scriptures,' as, for instance, Matt. xxii. 29, 'Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.' In St. Matthew v. 17, 18, after mentioning the whole as 'the Law and the Prophets,' He in the next sentence describes it all as simply 'the Law.' At another time He quotes from it thus: 'Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God? I am the God of Abraham,' etc., whereas this was literally *spoken* only to Moses, spoken to them as *written* in God's Book.

We find the same use of both 'Scripture' and 'Scriptures' by the Apostles in at least sixteen different places, as, for instance, that remarkable one in the Epistle to the Galatians (iii. 8): 'The Scripture, foreseeing that God would,' etc. The Second Epistle to Timothy (iii. 15-17), even if we should adopt the new rendering, 'Every scripture' instead of 'All Scripture' (though the older seems the most natural and genuine), is to the same effect. The Epistle to the Hebrews expresses the same thought with great power and solemnity in introducing a citation from the Psalms, with the words, 'As the Holy Ghost saith' (iii. 7, also ix. 8). The same idea of the one author and one substance of all Holy Scripture is implied in the Second Epistle of St. Peter (2 Pet. i. 20, 21), 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' The more and the more carefully we look at this truth and the proofs of it, the more will we see the *importance* of it. We must not forget it now, or treat it as of no practical use in the inquiry which follows, but apply it constantly and carefully at each stage of the research.

Some writers have assumed that this also implies a progressive development in time of the Word of God and true religion, the successive steps of which they think they can point out. At least, they confuse the truth of its unity and consistency with this notion of a chronological 'development.' But these two things have no necessary connection. The one, we have seen, is true; the other must stand upon its own merits. It certainly is not declared in Scripture itself. On the contrary, I shall have occasion in the history to point out facts which are entirely contrary to it. There is so much said in this age about a 'law of progress' and 'development' that most minds are afraid to maintain anything as truth unless they can adjust it to these theories. However that may be as to other knowledge, we must remember that these things of God are great mysteries, to which it is as 'natural' to go beyond our comprehension as it is for us to reduce all other things under that comprehension. If He in His very Word has left this vast

succession of the parts of that Word simply to be believed with awe and obedience, without our being able to see why this or that thing is done before the other, let us so accept the knowledge with faith and gratitude. Certainly we must not let any of these theories stand in the way of our believing the facts.<sup>1</sup> Even more important than all the matters so far treated in this chapter,—of seeing all the rest of Holy Scripture from the point of view of the Gospel of humility, reverence, and love of God, as conditions of the best understanding of His Book, of receiving it from the Church of God as its keeper, and using it as one complete Book,—more than all these, (and itself somewhat involved in all these, as we cannot have helped already seeing,) is the true thought of it as ‘the Word of God.’ We might think of it as just *a* sacred book, *the* sacred book of *our* religion, in various ways: as something to be read or recited in our worship, public or private; as the composition of the wisest and most pious men of a former age; as partly true and partly erroneous, partly Divine and partly human; as true in the past, and as a sacred link to the past, yet to be superseded by the greater intelligence of our or future generations. Or we may regard it as the one only and incomparable Book, which is God’s speaking to mankind as directly as if we ‘heard a voice, but saw no similitude,’ uttering what He would say to us all. But if this last is our belief, it excludes the others. It puts these writings upon altogether another plane than any others. It requires them to be treated, and studied, and used in a way entirely peculiar to them. It fixes whatever they say as truth, whatever else must then be wrong.

To settle this question is therefore now a necessary preliminary to the researches which follow. For while it is indeed *physically* possible for one who assents in terms to this last account of the Bible as being all God’s Word, nevertheless, to determine at the outset of a historical inquiry in which that is one of the materials, that it shall be merely used as and with other ancient books of history, as Herodotus or Manetho, and where there is a conflict of

<sup>1</sup> On this ‘Development,’ as set forth by Bishop Goodwin in *Modern Scepticism*, p. 231, etc., see *infra*, pp. 203, 274, etc.

their statements in such or such a case, that it may be adjudged in the wrong. But I do not see how this can be *rationally* done. Either it is no such perfect book of God—and this should be allowed at first,—or it is; and then its statements are absolute truth, and whatever does not agree with them is false.

Sometimes this has been supposed to depend upon whether we may consider the various human writers of the Scriptures as mere copyists of words which God uttered in their hearing or placed in their memories, without thought of their own, or not. The former seems at one time to have been the general impression of Christian writers, as shown in their often speaking of Moses and the Prophets, the Evangelists and Apostles, as ‘the sacred *penmen*.’ They certainly did not get this phrase from the Holy Scriptures themselves, nor, as it seems to me, any suggestion of it. On the other hand, some rejecting this, and noting how the individuality of the writer appears so plainly in Moses or David, in St. Paul or St. John, as much as in other compositions, drew the conclusion that they were like the other compositions, in being a mixture of the true and the false, which the reader must use his judgment to separate. But this does not follow of necessity. That would be so only in case it were self-evident or really *proved* that God could not use men with various characteristics of style and spirit, with the differences of language and information of various ages and countries, to write pure truth as He would communicate it to mankind. But why can He not? Is there anything in the garb, voice, language, habits of life or of thought of a Hebrew who has grown up in the Egypt of 3000 or 4000 years ago to make it impossible for GOD to put into his mind certain true thoughts, and direct him to write them for the information of other men in the way in which he would naturally express his own thoughts (that is, as God Himself had created and guided him so far in life), and also ensure that there should be nothing untrue in those words? If we think so we are surely forgetting that He is the Almighty God. So again, if the prophet be a Hebrew priest or king in a much later age, when the language has undergone considerable verbal changes; so, if one of Greek education; and who

wrote in that language. The very striking differences of the individual men, as well in those strongly-marked shades of intellectual and spiritual temper, which we find always in our fellow-men, as in the local and historical tints of their expressions—however interesting and worthy of attention in Christian study, and thus of admiration of God's work in all this and in all else,—have nothing whatever to do with our seeing (or not) the perfect Word of God in the Holy Bible.

The difficulty, as urged by some, is like what troubles some minds as to believing the Deity of Our adorable Lord, because in all the New Testament He is so plainly also 'the Man Christ Jesus.' A wise, healthy, humble 'obedience of faith' simply believes both. For another view of the matter, to clear our minds of any such prepossession and confusion, let us consider for a moment that great promise of His, that the Holy Ghost would 'guide' the Church 'into all truth.' No one supposes that this meant that the individual men would not be the same persons, with the same temperaments and habitual ways of thinking and expression as before. Would it have been wise or right in any Christian of the Apostolic age to deny this guidance through the preaching of St. Peter because he still had those personal characteristics by which he was recognised by all who knew him? Precisely so with what he or others *wrote* 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' By a sublime mystery in the human authorship of the Holy Scriptures, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Yet though for all else, 'they that are in the flesh cannot please God,' Our Lord in Person, and in His Written Word, is the sole exception to human error.

The Christian might also properly seek the answer to this great question where he receives the Book itself,—that is, from the Church; from the general consent of the Christian society in all ages from the beginning. It is quite certain that this sustains the very highest view of the dignity and authority of our Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. But treating this now as only establishing a fair presumption in favour of that view in our understanding of other evidence, let us go at once to the highest direct authority—that of Our Lord in the Gospels. He often cited the Old Scriptures, simply as Divine truth, in a way which implies that God has

spoken in those words, and that is an end of questioning. He never qualifies this, or counsels His disciples to do so. Evidently this is not done, as some have claimed, for a mere device of argument to silence those who admit those Scriptures to have such authority. Allowing that this might be properly done in any controversy between men, one who believes in Our Lord can hardly think it of any of His teachings. Why should we not rather suppose that He always said that which was true in itself to instruct them—and us? For those words were, as no one knew better than He, to reach ten thousand times as many souls through all these ages. And according to the other view, they have been misleading all the most believing and obedient ever since.

But in fact (and this not only otherwise sets our question in the clearest light, but, as it seems to me, forbids the notion just noticed) He cited those Scriptures as decisive authority, to the Evil One, who denies all God's Word, and to His own very dear disciples when, in confidential privacy and with all completeness, it was given to them, as He said, 'to know the Kingdom of God.' He taught them the greatest new 'things of God' out of the Old Scriptures, as Divine proof. The passages already cited in this chapter in the other part of the inquiry are very plain to this effect. For instance, one such is in St. Matthew. xxii. 31, 'Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?' etc. So also this in St. Mark xii. 36, 'For David himself says by the Holy Ghost,' etc. At another time (St. Mark vii. 6-13) He rebukes the Pharisees for 'making the Word of God (the Scriptures) of none effect through your tradition.' Notice the contrast. Just here was the occasion, (or He would have found some such occasion,) when Our Lord and Master would have delivered us from the bondage of superstition, if it be such, of regarding the Holy Writings as pure truth to be obediently received by us. He would have commanded us to exercise boldly our right of 'free handling' in adjusting these to our times—in rejecting as of no authority whatever in them did not, to quote Mr. Coleridge's phrase, 'find us;' or, interpreting them otherwise than according to what had always seemed their plain words, by the growing intelligence

of mankind. He does on this occasion notice an adjustment to the later thoughts of men of what had once been Divinely written, and He censures it with the greatest severity.

It was only the perverse errors of the Pharisees which He condemned as 'commandments of men,' do you say? But why did He never encourage His disciples to 'teach for doctrines' other and better commandments of men? Let all who wish to follow Our Lord's Will and words ponder this—whether it does not of itself suggest plain entire obedience to the plain and simple meaning of what 'is written,' without any new deviations or discoveries? Or study this remarkable saying in the Gospel of St. Luke (xi. 38), in which, with an apparent allusion to some sayings of the old prophets, He gathers all this into a mightier and more terrible prophecy of His Own, calling Himself by one of His great Names of dignity and mystery; 'As saith *the Wisdom of God*, I will send them prophets and apostles, . . . that the blood of all the prophets that was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel,' etc. Then also His last counsels and revelations to the twelve Apostles, after those greatest events of our redemption had revealed Him fully as Lord and Saviour, that 'then opened He their understanding, that they should understand *the Scriptures*, and said unto them, Thus *it is written*,' etc. (St. Luke xxiv. 45, 46.)

Now let us pause for a moment at this stage of our inquiry and consider. Beside all else that He is to us, He is the pattern Man. Surely, if it be the noblest matter of human intelligence to know God, and what God would teach us, we shall find Our Lord's footprints to follow in that. And where do they lead? To ambitious speculations of 'free thought'? to the suggestion that by such a treatment of the Holy Scripture rather than by the 'quiet mind' of simple obedience to 'what is written,' we shall find truth? No; but throughout all His words and acts, in uniform consistency, the opposite. In every act humble obedience (yes, even this, as He 'was made man'),—'to do Thy will'—in belief and thought. 'Thy Word (yes, "word," *λόγος*, "what is *said* and written") is truth.' Surely if our profession 'to follow the blessed steps of His most (wise and) holy life' is

sincere, this will not be without force as to what we will think of the Holy Scriptures, we who have in them not only Moses and the Prophets, but also Christ Himself and His Apostles. Can I be mistaken in thinking that in this direction, rather than the other, we shall find the true dignity of human nature?

All that we have of the sayings and doings of the Apostles in the Acts and Epistles is to the same effect. There are fifty such instances, and not one that I know of to the contrary. If there were any such, so as to make an apparent conflict, the wise thing would be to get a correct impression upon the whole by a complete reading, with care as to this, and a candid desire to find what was in the writers' minds. Such a reading I have tried to make, with this end in view; and, as the result, I do not know how any one can fairly doubt that the Apostolic Church had what would now be called 'a high view of the verbal inspiration' of all Holy Scripture. St. Stephen, that great and splendid (though so brief) instance and witness of the lofty spirit of Christian liberty, thus uses and names 'the lively oracles.' St. Paul, who so strangely succeeds the Martyr as the prophet of the 'free spirit' of the Gospel, proclaims the same through all his long career. At Thessalonica, with 'both Jews and Greeks,' he 'reasoned with them out of the Scriptures' (Acts xvii. 2). At Athens, where, if ever, he would teach an opposite doctrine, we have no such suggestion. Before the Pagan Roman, and the fierce though powerless hatred of persecuting Jews, he declares himself 'believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.' Yet it would have been entirely safe for him, and have rather recommended him to the governor, to have shown less subservience to that Hebrew 'superstition,' to use the very expression of Felix's successor.<sup>1</sup> When one speaks in that way now of the Holy Bible, does not every one know that he 'holds a very high view of verbal inspiration'? He repeats this confession of faith before King Agrippa, made even more emphatic by that personal appeal to the king's own heart. At Rome itself, even when he has to pronounce that Law and Prophets are forfeited by Jewish unbelief and

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxv. 19.



transferred to Gentiles, they are a Divine treasure of 'the salvation of God.' (Acts xxviii. 28.)

To this give he and all the other Apostles constant and consistent witness throughout the Epistles. A very few instances must represent all the others. In the Epistle to the Romans, which certainly involves the most free and profound treatment of the spirit of our religion, this is repeated in several places, as, 'What advantage then hath the Jew? . . . Much every way: chiefly, that unto them were committed the *Oracles of God*' (iii. 1, 2). Beyond any question this means the Sacred Writings; and no greater expression of their entire sacredness and truth could have been used in that generation to either Jew or Pagan than to call them 'oracles of God'—(St. Stephen said, 'living oracles'). In the same way he described what he and the other prophets of the New Testament were then writing by inspiration of God, which forms that most precious part of Holy Scripture now in our hands (I Cor. ii. 13): 'Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' To this exactly corresponds what St. Peter says (2 Pet. i. 20, 21), 'that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private (that is, individual, for each one to make of the sacred words what he pleases) interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' The more these remarkable words are examined to find all of their meaning, the higher idea do they give of Scripture. But for the present occasion only add to them the designation of it as used in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'As the Holy Ghost saith' (iii. 7); 'the Holy Ghost this signifying' (ix. 8). Recall also Our Lord's Own words in quoting from one of the Psalms: 'For David himself said, *by the Holy Ghost*,' etc. (St. Mark ii. 36). Nothing is more plain in the New Testament, even to those who are not fully persuaded to acknowledge and adore the Third Person of the One God, than that to speak of anything as said or done 'by the Holy Ghost' means by God Himself. How, then, can there be a reasonable doubt that, to say the least, these persons by the words just cited meant that God was the real, and, so to speak, the responsible Author of those writings?

The great book of the 'Revelation' is in perfect accord with the others. We may well believe that it is a part of the same Divine Inspiration that we find it placed at the very end of all the Writings, uttering such solemn and sublime warnings against 'whosoever shall add unto' or 'take away from the words of the book of this prophecy.'

And finally, there is (see *supra*, p. 73), the understanding and acceptance of this by the Christians of all ages since. In modern times, indeed, some who claim that name have argued differently. But, to say the least, those who thus disparage the authority of Holy Scripture are almost always those who maintain opinions which are against the plain words of that Scripture; and all of them are too few and of too recent date to be of any historical weight in this inquiry. Any one who will take the pains to read with careful reference to this all the extant writings of the first six Christian centuries, cannot but be struck with this frequent and unvarying reference to the Holy Scriptures as the highest and ultimate authority for all belief,—as the perfect Word of God to man, that 'high view of its verbal inspiration' which some now disparage. These writers may differ with one another and with our convictions as to various matters of Christian opinion, but they all agree in this. Let two quotations represent the thousand to the same effect which might be given to prove this:—Clement of Rome at the end of the first century: 'Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterance of the Holy Spirit. Observe that nothing of an unjust or counterfeit character is written in them' (*1st Epistle to the Cor.*, c. 45); Gregory (the Great) at the end of the sixth: 'For what is the Holy Scripture except a sort of letter of the Omnipotent God to His creature?' (*Ep.* 31).

Certain expressions from the Epistles of St. Paul have by some been cited for a different view—as, for instance, from the Epistle to the Romans, 'that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter' (vii. 6); 'Who hath also made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life' (2 Cor. iii. 6); 'Prove all things: hold fast that which is good' (1 Thess.

v. 21). This, it is said, shows that 'Christianity' is a 'reasonable service,' free and spiritual, emancipating us from bondage to the exact words of Scripture, so that we are to judge for ourselves at last what God would say to us. And with this, and as equivalent to it, is often coupled the great saying of Samuel the prophet, 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.' Yes, truly; but do we not see that the very question is, whether we will obey?—accept God's Word written with simple and prompt obedience—or claim a spiritual right of departing from that, according to our own thoughts? Was not that a reproof of Saul for departing from the letter of a Divine command, according to his 'private judgment,' the other way? Did the Prophet mean that when an Israelite read the command of God to sacrifice, he might refuse to do it, and say that, by his 'private judgment' of 'the spirit,' to obey was better?

We have already seen how St. Paul, in accord with His Master's words and way, cites the old Holy Scriptures as final authority, and claims the same (in substance) for the New. Does he then qualify, not to say contradict this, by what is said of 'spirit and letter' in the places noted? Is he in those places speaking at all of the Scriptures? No; in neither place, and nowhere else where such a meaning is sought to be placed upon his words. In the first passage cited he is showing the different position of the Jewish Christian under the Gospel from what it had been under the Law of Moses—how much more free, enlightened, and spiritual. In the course of this argument (in which he has himself cited the Old Testament Scripture more than a dozen times as the highest and conclusive authority for all men) he reminds them of the great truth already treated of in this chapter, that the Gospel is the substance of which that Law was the shadow: the real 'spirit,' of which that was the 'letter;' the circumcision of the former, writing, as it were, on the flesh, what Christ's salvation now writes upon the heart, 'that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.' It is therefore an utter misapplication of this to apply it in the other way.

So also the other passage. It is in a second letter, written to the Corinthian Christians, whom in the former he had

warned against the Greek philosophy (and whatever else tempts us to substitute our ambitious thoughts for a humble and obedient faith in God's Word), exalting 'the testimony of God,' and disparaging 'man's wisdom.' But is this Epistle in the opposite direction, recommending to them to try the 'letter' of what comes to them from God either in the old Scriptures of Law and Prophets, or by the spoken words of the 'Word of God' and His Apostles—to try all this by their thought, and only believe and obey it according to what they thus believe to be its 'spirit'? Not at all. He was not giving them any rule about their reading of Scripture, not mentioning it at all (unless in the way of making frequent quotations, which imply that its words are the truth of God which is decisive of any question). He is only (as the heading of this chapter in our Bibles wisely says) 'entering a comparison between the ministers of the Law and of the Gospel;' that these are 'ministers of the new testament (or covenant); not of the letter (see above as to Rom. vii. 6), but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' That is, for an Israelite to reject the Gospel when it comes, and adhere to the mere law of Moses, is to be blind to the real meaning of the latter:—as it were, to repeat the mere sound of the words, or gaze at the written characters, without seeing the meaning of them. It is death to that man instead of the new life of God in the soul of man by faith, obedience, and love. Read on after this, and we follow that very thought, as in the 15th verse, about the unbelieving Jews (ah, how true now!), 'but even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts. But we all (as Christian believers) with open face beholding,' etc. Is it not a strange perversion of this (making of *it* a 'letter that killeth'), to take it as St. Paul's counsel, that we are to subject that mighty and glorious Word of God, not only of the Old Scripture, but as written by His Apostles and Evangelists (including His Own personal sayings), 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,' but which 'the Holy Ghost teacheth,' to subject this to such 'man's wisdom' as each of us has? This is St. Paul's own account (1 Cor. ii. 13) of his own words in his Epistles, and, by most just implication, of those of the other writers of the New Testament.

If any one should ask whether it is not said after express mention of the 'new testament' that 'the letter killeth,' I need only remind him that there was then no *written* 'New Testament' such as he has in his mind. This very Epistle and other later writings were by slow degrees coming to form that most sacred part of the written Word of God. The only possible and the actual contrast in the writer's mind then was between the two *covenants*, for the word means either. Of these the old, by which a devout Israelite of former days used to draw near to God, and seek His pardon and grace, was but a 'letter' or figure of the other, a dim dawn of the bright day which had now come. To refuse this light of life, and draw back into the other, was to make that a 'letter that killeth.' Here was no injunction or permission to us to set aside the plain meaning of the Old Scriptures (or of the New), because we fancied that we knew their 'spirit' otherwise. If St. Paul had wished to say that, he would have found an occasion and very plain words for his purpose ; as he never did. I would not have believed it necessary to treat this objection seriously if I had not seen it put forth with positiveness in a journal of my own Church, which has much reputation (and thereby influence), as being learned, judicious, sound in the faith, and altogether safe from rash novelties of doubt with which our time abounds. But this shows how many good Christians may be persuaded by such arguments.

Nor is the 'proving all things' any such suggestion of our presumptuous subjecting of what 'the Holy Ghost saith' to our reasoning. It was what the Christians of Thessalonica were to do, then, in judging as to such utterances of their fellow-members of the Church as claimed to be some of the miraculous 'prophesyings' of that age, which ceased soon after, and have never since been known. Here also we may notice the assertion which has been sometimes made, that the Church in its first ages was without Scripture, and therefore does not so much need it, or at all depend upon it now, even if Christians should cease to regard it as all Divinely true. The assertion is certainly contrary to all history. As we have seen, all the Christian writers from the first are full of references to Scripture as the sacred and con-

clusive authority in all teaching and in all controversy. That at first this is said only of the Old Testament makes the case yet stronger. The special truths of the Gospel and of the Church of Christ were then made known by word of mouth, and these passed from one to another. But when, as with 'Moses and the Prophets,' what, as only spoken, was liable to be lost or changed in such transmission, was committed to writing, it was acknowledged as the perfect Word of God by the people of God, and kept among them by His providence and grace, just as the Old Testament had been. And this now complete revelation of God was understood in all the ages after as the invaluable and indispensable treasure of the Church. It is this in substance of which even one of its chief human authors said, 'If I or an angel from heaven proclaim unto you any other gospel, let him be accursed.'

Where, then, is the spiritual freedom of each soul? Certainly not in a right to deny plain words of rightful law. Is no one a free citizen who has to take the law of his country according to its letter? The 'glorious liberty of the sons of God' has its true exercise. But is nothing fixed and plain in our religion? is everything to be questioned, and argued about, and doubted? When God has given us His Will in words, can anything be more useless, more misleading, more fatal to poor, bewildered sinners like us, who need all this knowledge at once, than to reserve our obedience until we may satisfy ourselves in this sort?

The true religion, the Book itself, is all in the direction of humility, reverence, and faith; to promote and increase these, and to diminish their opposites. St. Paul always urges these as the conditions of our knowing God. We may give the substance of this in two of his sayings: 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' 'That no flesh should glory in His presence' (1 Cor. iv. 7, i. 29). This is the spirit and tendency of one of the two views of Holy Scripture which are here in contrast; the other is exactly opposite. By the one I may most humbly 'bow myself before the High God;' the other conducts me towards intellectual pride and self-sufficiency. And reverence is not merely the absence of positive irreverence. Or, to test the matter in another way, that we do not use contemptuous and disparaging words about Holy Scripture,

does not make us reverent toward it. Indifferency about its authority, cold and critical doubt, surely exclude due reverence. Which of the two views is the more likely to promote indifference and doubt? In that direction, then, are we least likely to find the Christian idea, the true meaning of what is said in God's Word written concerning its own character.

And this simple acceptance of the Holy Writings as God's Word, is so far from not being rational, that the contrary of it is irrational. Apply a like test to any human law. Suppose this at first made known only by the voice—by a herald. Could any one claim to set aside the 'mere words,' or find another meaning than the apparent one, by his 'private judgment' of their 'spirit'? But suppose them written and posted up, or printed and circulated, and that any one were then to say, 'It is unworthy of my free thought to be governed by printed words; all definitions of the truth are narrower than the truth itself. I must prove all things, and find a sense in the words which fits me (or finds me); and besides, in my investigations, I find that there are little differences of spelling of some words in some copies; and I claim that this shows beyond doubt that each one has a right to decide for himself that where the words apparently say that one shall *not* do such and such a thing they mean that he *may* do it.' This is not a caricature of the reasonings sometimes used about the 'words which the Holy Ghost teacheth' (1 Cor. ii. 13). What is monstrous in it is the actual false thought to which such arguments tend. Or will it be said that the cases are not parallel, because in human law men use language with a precision which other men cannot mistake? And do we mean that God, Who made language as one of the details of His all-knowing creation of us, cannot use human language with precision?

Or is this because such are man's nature and necessities that he cannot at once believe what is told him? And where shall we go for the most wise and sure knowledge of our *nature* in regard to this? Shall it be to human experience and speculation, even if we could be sure to have the real result of all the thought of our race until now? That must still be imperfect;—and what of all the generations before us? The case is indeed hopeless unless God Himself tells us what we need. We are certainly abundantly

informed by His loving care of where lies the greatest danger that we will reject truth, namely, from pride of intellect. And as to one kind of truth, the very Saviour of mankind and Light of the world has told us this most important fact, that 'men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' In matters mundane—not relating to the choice by our wills of either good or evil toward God and man—that danger is so small (at least comparatively), and the things themselves of so small account, that the correction of this misleading from truth may be left to those very personal ambitions which with rivalry scrutinise and expose the errors of one another. But in these spiritual things not only is error much more serious and disastrous, but the same wrong tendency being in all alike, prevents their correcting one another. This man has that same aversion to humility and to a loving obedience of God as the other whose errors he might detect. So he may ambitiously vary from the other man in the detail of his variance from the truth; but this will bring neither of them nearer to that truth. This is really implied in the story of man's fall in the Genesis, which, whatever we may think of it otherwise, is the only profound and truth-resembling account of the present state of mankind,—that is, of an ideal man, who has great and good thoughts, and sometimes struggles towards them, and even fancies that he is what he knows he ought to be; and an actual man, who is far, very helplessly far, from this great and good ideal. Why should the test by which the first man failed, and lost all for us all, have been his craving a 'knowledge of good and evil,' which was forbidden him? And what is man's attitude toward this knowledge now that he has made the wrong choice, in which each individual soul of us, besides the inherited mischief, repeats the evil choice as a matter of course, and needs Divine deliverance from the consequences of it?

It does not at all accord with this to assume that all men habitually (I do not say naturally, for that would be confusing the difference between the original nature and that which we have since this fall) love all truth, and only need to persevere in their own ambition after it to attain a perfect knowledge of true religion and all spiritual goodness. On the contrary, in fact, as implied in the doctrine of both New and Old Testaments, they thus go further and further from



such truth. They cultivate self-confidence; they grow in ambitious delight in their own thoughts; they do just the opposite of what God's Word recommends. Therefore every step they take must be, not toward, but away from, that truth,—at least that is what our Lord and His Apostles say in substance in the New Testament. Now, if a remedy is provided for this by the Great One, Who is love and truth itself—if 'He so loved the world' as to send His Word among men, by inspiration of several of their fellow-men, and finally as a human Person Himself, could we reasonably expect this Word to be left for almost all of mankind mingled in an indistinct way with very much of fallible human thought—the Divine truth to be separated from the human error by men's own reasonings as to what part of this so-called 'Word of God' was really such? Would not this at once again expose them to the very danger of their intellectual vanity, from which it was meant to save them? Would there not then be just as many different accounts of the Word of God thus ascertained as there were ingenious leaders of thought?—why not, indeed, as many as there are human souls, for this 'dignity of human nature'—not merely of a few favoured persons—must, for that in which we are all concerned alike, allow a like independence and liberty to all? And we should certainly find in such a supposed 'Word of God' (once secured by written language for all, completed and compiled in one 'Book of God,') plain instructions to this effect:—'Look here, saith the Lord God, to separate by your thoughts and "private judgment" the mistakes and trivialities of these prophets from that which I really say. Let each successive age, let each soul for itself, take the Book up anew for this purpose, for, after all, this is not all the Word of God, but in it the Word of God "is contained" for each one of you, as he shall in his own way and upon his own responsibility find it out from the rest.'

Then also the Divine Society, as 'witness and keeper' of the Book, would have always been saying the same, instructing its members that such was their duty and right.

Finally, when the Sovereign Teacher and Incarnate Word was upon the earth, 'going about doing good,' for one thing, in this great work of teaching men what we may now read in the Gospels, He surely would have told us this

most precisely and beyond mistaking. He would have said, 'If any man will be My disciple, let him read the Law and the Prophets with discrimination, to separate the real Word of God from the rest of the words of those writers. Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden with perplexities of belief, and I will give you rest by showing you how to throw off the yoke of a blind obedience to that which is written.' He would have broken the charm of the superstitious habit of allowing a 'verbal inspiration' by Himself departing from it in His manner of naming and using 'the mere literary record.' On the contrary, though this was the inferior part of it, the 'shadow' of the perfect 'good things' of God's Word yet to come—now, *having* come in His Person and Church,—everything He said or did about it was in the way of simple reverence, obedience, and faith; and nothing whatever did He say to suggest that the growing intelligence of any individual or of any age needs or would allow of any other treatment of 'what is written.'

This negative argument, if it stood alone, would be almost (if not quite) conclusive to one who wished simply 'to be His disciple,'—to follow in thought and will exactly where He led. But, as we must feel at once from the recollection of other sayings of His already cited in other parts of this inquiry, it does not stand alone. If He had said absolutely nothing bearing upon this matter, some might have thought that He had left it entirely free to men—in fact, their duty—to claim and use such liberty in finding in Holy Scripture what they judged Divinely true, and rejecting the rest. They would have supposed Him thus to have silently recognised this as part of the essential liberty of the human soul, made in the Divine image, and seeking truth by its own instinct—a part of its necessary responsibility and discipline, and so of personal liberty and nobility, enlarged just in proportion to its activity in thinking, and abridged by every act of mere belief, obedience, or submission. But did the Light of the world and the Saviour of men give this account of their nature? Nowhere that I know of. Is it not He Who said that men 'loved darkness rather than light'? that 'he who exalteth himself shall be abased'? and that 'he who humbleth himself shall be exalted'?—in this (St. Matt. xviii. 4) comparing them to little children, who simply and

obediently receive knowledge, instead of those ambitious and self-confident explorers who conquer it. Nor does He suggest an exception as to this when we come as learners to the Holy Writings. On the contrary, to say nothing of His Own invariable example of quoting from them as conclusive authority in the supreme questions—just as one who holds the highest view of their inspiration would do now—He said some things most distinctly and emphatically, which have seemed to His people in all ages (until this late questioning by some) to be the exact opposite. How can we think that if He did not mean us to take all this Holy Scripture as God's Word, He would not have said something to that effect, if it were only to keep us from the misapprehension of His other words (if it be such), which was so likely, and in fact has been all but universal? Not one word have we to this effect, nor from His Apostles in their inspiration to further show forth His doctrine.

And now do these actual sayings of His admit of any fair doubt of their meaning? Are they prescribed only for a class of persons?—for the few very ignorant or least thoughtful? for the many, as such, while the very few who can be learned and acute, and can 'think for themselves,' are not amenable to them? Certainly not. They are for all—with this qualification only, that they are more directly addressed to this latter class as the most exposed to the danger in question.

HE said—and I know nothing in all writing which in all its circumstances deserves more silent and concentrated attention to what is said, as giving us the best glimpse of how mankind need to learn truth about religion—nothing more emphatic and solemn, more commanding and conclusive, addressed immediately, not to men, but to God Himself, and therefore the most pure and exalted truth: 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight' (St. Matt. xi. 25, 26).

Look at this long and attentively, as a great pillar of thought and speech, with its base upon earth, and its head rising into Heaven. Go around it and survey it from all points. Stop and meditate upon its possible meanings

and applications. The more one does this, the more it will appear that the highest truth we can know is that which God utters to us directly in words, and which is least the product of our reasonings or imaginings.

It is in exact opposition to a thought which might arise in a man's mind to this effect: 'God has revealed truth to mankind about Himself as well as all else. But this must all come through our minds. He has surrounded us with objects which suggest thoughts, and through these thoughts we must learn all that we need to know. But for the greater part of our race, who are otherwise occupied, or of feebler intellectual force, and of less aspiring and ambitious disposition that way, all this must be done by us, the philosophic and intelligent (words exactly corresponding to *σοφοί καὶ συνετοί*, which are not really represented to us by 'the wise and prudent,' in our usually excellent A.V.). Most of all is this so in regard to the highest and most spiritual truth,—that is, as to God and goodness. Thus through the thoughts of mankind, in degree as they are acutely and ambitiously thoughtful, does He reveal Himself to them. This in substance we might think as belonging to the intelligence and freedom of the human mind.'

If it had been the purpose of the Speaker to contradict and forbid this thought, nothing could be more to the purpose than the words of Our Lord last cited. And therefore beyond doubt that was His purpose. The one Man Who alone (as being indeed Himself the Eternal Creator) 'knew what was in man' (wonderful saying!) addressed God with a thanksgiving in behalf of us all, that He had 'revealed' the most vast and yet most urgently necessary things to men. But to whom primarily and representatively for all?—To the very few who have most capacity and most opportunity of elaborating in their minds what shall afterwards be imparted to the rest? Exactly the opposite of this. To those who represent the simple and ready reception of what is told them; to those who have not yet begun the ambitious search of all that is around them for new discoveries, which is useful enough in lower matters of knowledge; to those who represent, as some would make the distinction, the blind believers, as opposed to the intelligent investigators. But can we yet suppose that it does not quite mean this,

plain as the words are, but the more childlike of the philosophic and intelligent class, the more candid and believing of them? No; this understanding is impossible. In fact, it is not the 'revealing' at all for which our Lord first thanks the Father, but for a 'hiding' of these things from the σοφοί καὶ συνετοί. Every possible escape from the force of this, as being inadvertent or figurative, or a rhetorical exaggeration, etc., is cut off by considering the Speaker, the Listener, and all the incidents. No, surely. He says—and there is an end of doubting by Christians—that what God thus reveals comes most directly and effectively to those who are disposed simply to believe the words and act upon them at once; and less clearly and usefully to those whose habit of mind is to be critical and discriminating about everything that is offered to their belief. And the great force of this is even heightened by its being an occasion of thanks and praise to God, and afterwards exulted in as being His mere good pleasure.

At other times also does He use this illustration of being like a 'little child' in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And while in those other passages the more immediate reference is to simplicity, humility, and an obedient spirit, all that agrees in spirit with this great passage in reminding us that such obedience and submission of mind is a condition of our having the great things of God 'revealed' to us. Even in one of the old prophets there is a beautiful disclosure of this same great truth (Isa. lxvi. 2): 'But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at (hears with awe and prompt obedience) My word.' A beautiful allusion also there seems to be in the First Epistle of St. Peter (ii. 2): 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word,' where, if our A.V. be not literal enough in rendering the adjective λογικόν, the 'Revision' has altogether lost the verbal felicities and allusions to λόγος just before (i. 23), and ῥῆμα as its equivalent in ver. 25.

In pursuance of this same thought the holy Apostles in the Scriptures which they wrote urge men, as they would learn of God and please Him, to receive what knowledge He sends them in the Gospel and by His messengers with simple and prompt obedience, and warn them against mingling

their own thoughts with this or modifying it by them. They bear steadily and uniformly against that, as there lying all the danger for us. Such are the very plain and powerful sayings of St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians as to man's wisdom. If, nevertheless, we could think that possibly he did not mean just this, but, on the contrary, meant to allow of our trying the 'Word of God' when it came to us either in speech or writing by our own 'verifying faculty,' he would have said that too most explicitly, as he never does.

The great saying of St. Peter (2 Pct. i. 20, 21) also, already cited, as to the general idea of Holy Scripture found in the New Testament, is very clear as to this: 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Thus the 'prophetic Word' (*προφητικὸν λόγον*) of vers. 19, and this 'prophecy of the Scripture' are exactly equivalent to 'God's Word Written,' which is declared to be never 'of private,' *i.e.* individual, 'interpretation,' or for any one to find in it a meaning other than that of the plain words, and as the Church has always understood them. Just so it was no 'will of man,' no mere human thought and purpose which first uttered it. The men may have been only conscious of such a purpose; but in fact, borne along (*φερόμενοι*) by the Holy Ghost, they spoke as 'men of God.' It is of no effect upon this whether we retain or omit the adjective *ἄγιοί*. But the 'Revision' is nowhere less fortunate in its departure from the Authorised Version, not only as to elegance of language, but as to clear and faithful rendering of the original. Yet to adopt the later translation would not lessen the substantial force of the passage in this connection.

In this, as throughout the New Testament, in all it says of men's treatment of the Word of God to them, whether written or spoken, if there is anything which is expressly *excluded*, it is addition to or change of it by human thought. Doubtless God could have—and then it would have been for us to receive *that* with humble gratitude—communicated all which He wished men to know through their minds, without any 'Word' at all, prompting them to *think* in such a way that from the objects and occasions of thought in which He

placed them they would 'come to the knowledge of that truth.' Or He might have given them a 'Word,' and also bidden them elaborate this and adjust it by their own thoughts, so that the joint product would be what they 'ought to know and believe for their souls' health.'

The former method, we may reasonably believe, He has made the chief means of inferior knowledge for us. But that which is the most lofty, the most difficult for us such as we now are, and yet the most incessantly, universally, and urgently *necessary* for each soul, He gives directly by 'Word.' And, as we have just seen, so far from at all making that depend upon our intellectual ambition, He forbids such a thought, and warns us against it as one of the very great dangers from which His Gospel rescues us.

If we obey this voice of our Lord, and apply His counsel of humility and obedience to our own time and case, we find that it applies specially to our use of the Holy Bible. We must think of it and treat it with the belief that we are 'babes,' and most carefully beware of the false position of the 'wise and prudent.' But once receiving its words with entire humility and obedience, we may then well use all our power of thinking to make the best use of this most valuable knowledge. Now which of the two views of 'inspiration' does this Christian method best agree with? Does it not really exclude the one, as that by which the Word of God would be 'hidden' from us, and require the other by which it will indeed be 'revealed'?

It is not impossible that this may still seem to some a 'hard saying,'—so contrary to 'facts' that it *cannot* and *must* not be true,—that no argument and no authority can prove it. But let us discriminate as to what authority we can set aside, and let us make sure that we do not mistake our own obstinate and wrong prepossessions for a true understanding of the nature and needs of mankind. Do these 'facts' come in the shape of a belief that the Scriptures contain errors of fact, even self-contradictions, which forbid you and me to believe that they are the entirely true Word of God? Yet for one thing, I, having considered all these supposed 'facts,' still have, in fact, no doubt of those Scriptures being inspired as here maintained. Allowing to the 'facts' the most that can be fairly, the wise and reverent attitude of

the Christian believer is that all things belonging to his faith in God are of a higher order than they, and cannot be affected by them. They are liable to the misinformation and misjudgment which are possible in all our lower knowledge; the things of faith are not. At the most, he has some perplexity as to the slight errors in his copy of the Bible, whether from the trivial mistakes of a copyist or printer, or really from his own misunderstanding of the details. For the sufficient answer of common sense to any demand that he shall renounce faith in this Word of God is that there is not a discrepancy or difficulty of them all which would at all affect what we should know and believe, or any question which is to be decided by the authority of Holy Scripture. Suppose the printed copy of the laws of the State which you read misspells an unimportant word, and you say that this error makes you doubtful of all its authority, and so refuse all obedience. Will this prove anything but your disloyalty? Suppose that Baruch, reading from the roll of Jeremiah, had mispronounced a trifling word, would that have justified the haughty Jews of the Court and the Temple in saying 'For this we reject this burden of the Lord; at least, this compels us to discriminate as to what part of it we will receive, and as to whether we will save Judah and Jerusalem from the coming destruction by repenting and turning to the Lord our God'? Would these have been any safer from that awful judgment when it came than those who had disbelieved without that pretext? Had I no higher reason for believing this Book to be the Word of God in the sense now maintained than would be seriously affected by the question whether both or which of the copyists of Kings or Chronicles were right as to a certain numbering of the Israelites, or such things as that, my faith would not be of much account. But, in fact, it remains undisturbed by this and all the other 'difficulties.' They certainly will not persuade me of a 'theory' of inspiration which is against the whole tenor of the Book and the very spirit of our Lord's and His Apostles' doctrine. But this prepossession seems to lurk in other minds in the shape of a feeling that the necessary discipline of free, intelligent choice in a 'state of probation,' of the growing intelligence of the individual as well as of the race,



of the conflict with doubt and evil desire, and final victory over them—that all this is opposed to simple faith in words. They assume that such faith must cramp, degrade, and dwarf the minds of men; that it is also wrong, because subjecting them to the tyranny of other men.

But to argue thus rests all upon a false assumption. Simple truth would teach us that our Most Wise and Loving Lord knows all these things better than we do; that all which is really good and noble must lie in that path of humility and obedience in which He requires us to walk. Let us recur to His Own illustration of little children. We must not weary of this, or take it as a childish trifling with us. The more we study it, the more comes out of it its deep meaning and practical use. Nor must we at all resent this comparison as an attempt to belittle and enslave those whose right and duty it is to be great and free. We may not say, 'But we are not children merely to obey our betters; we are men and women, with the freedom, dignity, and responsibility before God of seeking His truth and following it for ourselves.' Yet this is some of that certain truth which we should only wrong and disgrace ourselves by refusing to see. It is that same great God Who says this, 'and with Whom we have to do' in the matter, the only question being whether, when He teaches and commands in words, we are not all of us alike simply to believe and obey. What, then, is the little child before his elders to illustrate this? He is their helpless inferior as to all he most needs to know. It depends upon them whether he will ever survive long for growing intelligence and increasing knowledge. The use of language itself and the art of reading, the very key to all human learning, he must get from them. And these very rudiments ('letters,' 'elements,' *στοιχεῖα*, Gal. iv. 3, etc.), he can gain only by faith in his teachers, by obedience, without at all understanding *why* this sound or that letter represents such or such a thought rather than another. This is of necessity, as we may say, 'arbitrary.' It is not his independent judgment which he must use, but an obedient memory—no sort of reasoning, only simple 'faith.' And so with his first knowledge of facts beyond the very little range of what he can see or touch. He may soon know something of his own country far beyond his own eyesight;

of the lands across the sea, and all 'the round world;' of sun, moon, and stars. How?—By his investigations and 'free thought'? Certainly not. By mere faith in what he is told. (Indeed I do not know that we, any of us, feel much disgraced, because, *in fact*, a great part of what we know comes to us by mere faith in what others tell us, or we read. We would rather be ashamed to be without the supposed knowledge.)

Yet, after all, the child is of the same nature as his elders. He is all the time growing towards equality of intelligence with any of them, perhaps to become their superior. And this may and ought to qualify our idea of his inferiority.

But as an illustration of what we are before God, that qualification disappears. So far from the comparison making too much of our inferiority, it is only vastly inadequate. We never can outgrow the relation, and in our turn become such as can reveal this truth to mere 'babes;' we are rather thus in actual danger of getting among the 'wise and prudent,' from whom it is 'hidden.' No maturity of man or woman, or long time of thought, ever makes us any nearer in knowledge to the Great Revealer. It is by keeping this in mind by simple obedience and faith that we shall best walk in the light of His truth. We are thus always 'learning our letters' directly from Him. A thousand successive generations of us (and there have been only some hundred in all) could never elaborate and lay up so much truth that we could any more dispense with this direct teaching of God than could Adam have done, or the generation of the Gospel.

Why, then, not take this comparison and lesson in all its plain force? why not see that in this abasing of ourselves God will exalt us? why may He not have—*has* He not?—plainly given us His perfect written Word for our entire belief and obedience? And then, as with the little child, this subjection is really the first and necessary step to the noblest thought. Who really makes the best use of that power of thought—he who spends years of toilsome doubt and reasoning as to whether there be the Great Eternal Almighty Love, or he who, simply and promptly accepting this as God Himself tells it to him, goes on to meditate upon it, to see God continually in all things, and thus continually to love and adore Him? And so also, which uses his power

of thought to the best purpose—he who, receiving a verbal communication from God of the greatest and most urgent truth, employs it in puzzling and arguing as to how much of this he will thus accept, or he who, receiving it ‘as a little child,’ loses no time in that way, but goes on at once to think about this revealed truth, and make the utmost use of it? There have been many of the most profound and acute thinkers, who, taking all the Holy Bible as truth of God, have spent all their lives and minds upon it as such, to their own great advantage, and that of their fellow-men, and to His great glory. And what is of more importance yet, there is a vast multitude, ‘whom no man can number,’ of all sorts of plain people, who, by the same faith and diligence, have lived happier and wiser than any doubters that ever were.

Is not this use of Holy Scripture by a Christian far more in accordance with the words and general spirit of teaching of Our Lord and His Apostles than the other? If there are any who still do not like to admit this, I would present it now in the form of this dilemma. Either those to whom He said these things, subjecting human thought to what is simply revealed—that is, all the Jews of His own time, and His Church afterwards—were right in the ‘high view’ they actually held of the verbal inspiration of Scripture, or they were not. If they were, why do you not also allow it, thus also following Our Lord’s own example of entire obedience to what ‘is written’? If they were not right, why did not He (the great Deliverer from all bondage, especially from every sort of religious error and tyranny) reprove them for it, and give them just such a lesson of freedom from that misleading superstition as you now put forth? Why did not He, with His all-seeing glance over the future, and His all-powerful authority over ‘all things in heaven and upon earth,’ say that the growing intelligence of mankind needed such ‘free thought’ and ‘free handling’ of all ‘which is written,’ so that they might thus see more of the Divine truth? Or does the rejector of the ‘high view’ of inspiration require a low view of His courage, wisdom, and authority, as the great Instructor of mankind? And what does that suggest?

Fellow-Christians, let us make no mistake here. Far better—is it not?—to err on the side of humility and love than on the opposite. If we were to insist that from our own inherent

freedom and respect to our own intelligence, we must be less subject to the letter of God's Word written than this authority has shown us to be, and take this strong persuasion of our own for overruling authority, would not that be exalting our self-will against His righteous Will? If that be an 'inspiration,' too, is it not a different and a hostile one, against which that inspiration which is of Divine love warns us as being abroad in the world?

'*Must*' is a very strong word to use in resistance of what even *seems* to be His Will. At least this much is due to the humility which becomes us toward these Holy Scriptures, that we subject to them our mere idea of the rights of man toward God (the insignificant and guilty creature toward Him), and, however strong our mere prepossessions of thought, relinquish as a mistake whatever is against their plain words. *May* we not possibly be mistaken? Suppose we yet find out that we were so, how inexpressibly silly will this obstinate adherence to our self-conceited mistake then appear!—all the more absurd because our *reason* for this was only our sentimental notion (the most perverse and selfish sort of sentimentalism) of our individual rights, resisting truth which the love of God was teaching us, and to abase ourselves before which would have brought us to the highest exaltation.

Any one may wisely say: 'The written Word is far above my best thoughts. To substitute them for it by any sort of self-persuasion would be a great misfortune to me. All probabilities are for the literal correctness of what I read here. And if I venture at all to think that human copying or printing has erred from the perfect original about some unimportant incident, it must always be with a humble reservation of judgment that even in this I may be mistaken.'

Beyond doubt, the two views of inspiration are contradictory of one another. One or the other we should choose and firmly adhere to. Which shall it be? To avoid dangers? On the one side are said to be those of human tyranny, of the few over the many—and of slavish subserviency on the part of the latter, and losing the discipline and improvement, both mental and spiritual, of such 'liberty;' on the other, of losing the Divine 'light and truth' given to us, and wandering off into our own mistaken fancies (or other men's),

of the self-deceptions of pride, of the disobedient, selfish, and self-willed spirit. Which are really the greater dangers for us? against which does the Divine wisdom and love warn us most? But, in fact, we do not need to make this choice. The former dangers are imaginary and unreal as stated. They belong really on the other side. There cannot be a greater guaranty for the rightful personal liberty of thought for Christians than in a plain letter of law to which all are alike amenable as the highest authority. It is one aspect of the old question as to human government, whether 'personal' or by law. All history shows that an 'open Bible' in all hands, and submitted to by all alike as the voice of God, is both the greatest preservative of true doctrine from artful or oppressive perversions by the powerful few, and the best means to make well-taught and well-grown Christians of a whole people. If either it is withdrawn from such general knowledge or not regarded and used with such reverent faith, neither liberty nor truth will be maintained.

And the same is true of each soul's spiritual life and growth in all that purifies and ennobles it with all good knowledge (knowledge of good?),—with the love of God and man. Our Master has provided all we need for this. He has given Himself to us as the Word of God, and set up His Church as the home for our souls, and 'caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning,' and given it to us in and through the Church, that 'we may in such wise,' with obedient faith in it all, 'read, learn,' etc., as to live a happy and godly life, grow in this grace and knowledge, and become more suited to our greater and better everlasting life.

Has He ever said or implied that we would be the better or wiser in this for thinking ourselves above the words of Holy Scripture? or that in the future the advancing intelligence of mankind would expand beyond the limits of the verbal Gospel? Has He, or any one in His Name, told men that they were, or would ever be, endowed with such humility and spiritual sagacity that they might safely and wisely use this in rising above the 'letter' of Scripture? Shall we indeed, in spite of all this, stand upon our imagined 'rights,' and say to such love and authority, 'You cannot and you shall not degrade *me* to the level of these babes'?

Rather if, by our position among our fellow-men, we seem to belong among the 'wise and prudent,' let us beseech of His tender and gracious majesty to allow us too, by humility and obedient faith, to sit at His feet with those who believe every word that 'is written,' and only use all our powers of study and thought to receive this 'revealing' of truth and glory, to find and use all its power. This equality of us all before Him is the truth itself, and the greatest real honour for us all, as 'heirs together' of an everlasting life—a holy and spiritual life in the love of God with all the heart, finding our chief joy in His glory. Thus, too, 'the rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker (and the Teacher) of them all.'

If we will look attentively and candidly, we shall see that for our case, in all likelihood, a Divine Scripture would not have been given, leaving us in any doubt whether some part of it was not merely the fallible thoughts of some of our fellow-men, or tempting us to intellectual pride; nor, on the other hand, full of sayings which most people would take for the (in that case) wrong view, that it was all the perfect truth of God, and without a word to the contrary.

In much lower knowledge, of far less real authority and probability as certain truth, of much less urgent necessity for us all to know, he who, for instance, aspires to the higher mathematics, yet will not take the *Principia* of Newton as so much truth already ascertained, and from this go on to further application, but must spend all his time in a doubting 'verification' of that, is counted a fool. We are impatient of like folly in those who in matters of law will insist upon always arguing first principles, and go over and over all the ground of *res adjudicatæ*, as if nothing had ever been settled. And cannot our God and Saviour have given us this much certain knowledge, unmixed with what is doubtful, from which we may go on to perfection, for us simply to learn, and in its use find all we need for using our power of thought?

*When* this Divine Word began to be among men *in writing*, is rather a question of the *history*, as we shall now follow that. It is, however, well to say here that we are not bound to think that this must have waited upon the

tardy invention of some men of false religion. It is in its nature one of the most reasonable questions whether a matter so great for man's spiritual good, and about to enter so largely in fact into all the grace of God to him, was not directly supplied in times long before any of the first very rude inventions of Egyptians, Phœnicians, Assyrians, Indians, or Chinese. To sneer at this as 'bigotry,' is really a very narrow feebleness of thought, which *takes for granted* that the Christian idea of History cannot be true. The soul of that idea is in the belief that the Eternal and Almighty God does His Will in all the history of mankind, they, with their entire free-will, being nevertheless (oftenest unconsciously) the agents of that Will. And a written Word from Him being so great a part of (or bearing so great a part in) His Will, might well be earlier provided for, and that among the people where His truth best survived by oral tradition from the first. In fact, as connected and complete early history, at the lowest estimate of this which we can reasonably make, nothing from any of those other sources bears any comparison with what we have from the Book of Genesis.

The results of our inquiry are, then, that, upon the Christian 'theory' of the earliest history of mankind in the Book of Moses ('Genesis' as the first part of that writing, for the common division of it into the five books is a late and rather arbitrary one), (1) the history is all to be looked at and understood from the point of view of the Gospel of Our Lord; (2) that it is received by us from His Church as its witness and keeper; (3) that the whole Bible is so received as one Book, the various parts being understood and interpreted by one another; and (4) that of this one Book God Himself is rather the real Author than the various men who wrote its parts by His inspiration, so that it is His Word—and truth unmixed with error,—therefore of higher authority upon everything it does say than any or all other evidence.

Let us, then, as Christians (and those who, disdaining the obligation implied in that title, are yet willing to go with us in a trial of this 'hypothesis' as to its explanation of all the facts of History) proceed to trace the story of man and his religion as recounted in that Book.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PRIMITIVE RELIGION.

THIS history begins with one family, the man Adam and his wife Eve. They talk together of God, and of what He has said to them. Our Lord recognises this account (St. Matt. xix. 4: 'Have ye not read that He Which made them at the beginning,' etc.), and St. Paul alludes to and makes use of it in his revelations (1 Cor. xi. 7-12, xv. 45, etc. ; 1 Tim. ii. 13, etc. etc.). We are therefore at once upon firm ground of historic fact. This shuts off from our inquiry all that at any time, and especially in these later ages, has been reasoned or conjectured by men as to ages preceding the creation of mankind. Whatever be the merits of all that, it has nothing whatever to do with this history of Religion. In like manner it excludes all the conjectures, wise or otherwise, as to certain creatures having by degrees of change from four-footed brutes, or even very far back of this—from mere lumps of sea-mud, jelly-fish, or the thinnest gas—improved by slow degrees into these upright beasts, all but men. If any one can believe all that, and also believe that this *anthropoid* (that is, *man-oid*) became at last a man and woman (though, whatever others may accomplish in the way of such belief, I do not see how a Christian can), that has nought to do with our inquiry, which begins with *mankind*.

Here is religion already and at once of a very elevated (and refined) sort, certainly as compared with that of a vast number of mankind even now. There is nothing superstitious, silly, unhappy, gloomy, or cruel about it. Is it not indeed in some respects practically above any religion of our own now—with no thought of a guilt which needs expiation, no distressing fear of the object of worship? The One Only



and True God is alone adored, and He personally communicates with His worshippers in words. He graciously commands and they cheerfully obey. What He thus says is of course the Word of God, to say the least, as much as any Scripture we now read, or anything of which a holy prophet ever truly declared, 'Thus saith the Lord.' In this we have, as it seems very plain to me, one of the great things involved in the sentence: 'In the beginning was the Word.' (*Λόγος* is commonly the very term used for all the Word of God whether by voice or Scripture.) The Greek of the Old Testament (LXX.) uses the very same words (*ἐν ἀρχῇ*) in Gen. i. 1. And Our Lord (as noted before, p. 100) vouches for this as the true history, using this very word *ἀρχῇ*,—when, condemning a certain practice of the Jews about marriage, He says that 'from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female' (St. Mark x. 6).

But the greatest light thrown upon this was when He chose out from the latter part of this book of Moses one sentence, which had before been relatively unnoticed, and declared it to be the substance of all the written Word, and of all true religion, thus: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets' (St. Matt. xxii. 37-40).

The very highest authority for Christians, the chief voice in all the Word of God, has therefore informed us of what God first commanded, and that this involves all religion and virtue; that all else which was spoken or written for men by His inspiration 'hangs upon'—depends for its meaning and its force upon—these two laws. It is somewhat curious that in all the books written by famous Christians or their imitators upon 'Moral Philosophy' or 'Ethics,' these laws have never been stated as the basis, the substance of those matters. Many other things have been so laid down, and some of these only differing from one another in the use of another word. Sometimes the second of those great laws has been barely mentioned as thus inclusive. But if there is any instance in which what He said, as He said it, has been

made the basis and method of treatment of 'morals,' I do not know it.

It is also in substance the only right answer to the question of the purpose of man's existence,—what we were made for, and should adjust all our thoughts of 'duty' around. The force of the word 'first' in fixing this is very great. We need not lose the idea of time in this by referring the sense of 'first' only to importance. That has its mention in the other adjective, 'great.' In fact, to admit it to be first in importance would compel us to think that it could not have been left to come later in time to our knowledge and obedience. (As upon this we must build all right understanding of the whole subject, we must now give it most careful consideration.)

In the history we are shown the simple and wonderful picture of two persons of our race, alone in the world—innocent and religious, knowing and loving God,—speaking of and to Him, and being spoken to directly by Him. But we have voices all around us now, of great influence upon the opinions of others, which say (or imply) that this cannot be literally true, that it must mean something else than its plain words, etc. This is assumed upon the ground of certain theories of the nature of man, of his past history, and of the purpose of his existence. All this was of necessity somewhat anticipated in Chapter III. p. 51, etc. But there it was needed to show upon the ground of all reasonable probability that the history in the first of Genesis ought not to be turned into an allegory to support the notion of 'Natural Religion.' Here it is the simple question of God's Word interpreted by itself, according to the principles established in Chapter IV.

Ah, if He Who does know it all would but speak Himself and tell us what this purpose is! He has. He does now in the Gospel. We are to read the Genesis in the light of His words. Many such wonderful and most valuable words there are there. But in its place, and supremely for our purpose, there is not one saying greater than this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' etc. Surely those who were made to do that, and really once did it, are to be looked up to by us all with the greatest interest, admiration, and honour.

Then, too, we look into the Scriptures of the Apostles, and

we learn from them that 'in Adam all men did die;' that so great was his position to all our race that his mischoice and misstep afterwards was fatal to all the thousands of millions of human souls; that he holds towards us a relation in some sort corresponding to that of our most glorious and Blessed Lord Christ, one of Whose titles is 'the Last Adam.' Everything thus suggests that we should rather in some sense look up with an exulting sense of honour to this great first man, than fancy any one of us to be at all his superior.

There was at one time, and perhaps still survives in some quarters, a technical theology, which had much to say of Adam as the 'federal head' of mankind, for whose acts we were in some way responsible. The phrase is not of Holy Writ, nor the thought either, it seems to me, as thus insisted upon. It is one of those attempts to define and state better than God's Word does a great mystery, which it is far the best for us to leave where He left it, and say no more than He says.

One thing is certain to begin with, that of all that lives upon the earth, this being God made 'in His own image.' That is a most wonderful distinction, which we can only understand at all by carefully thinking of God and of the human nature according to the best understanding we can gain of that, and consulting all else in His Word which may help in that way. Of course it does not mean that we are eternal and almighty persons, as He alone is or can be. We must even confess that evidently we have suffered some degradation from what man was then at the first, because, for one thing, we ought to be in our actions much better than what we really are. What is there, then, possible to man in regard to which he might have been and was 'made in the image of God'?

For one thing, to be a *spirit*; to have an immaterial mind which thinks and knows; a will to choose, and to act upon that choice; to be a 'person.' And is that all?—all for which God created him? the chief law for his life? the purpose of Him Who knows and does all? and with that purpose has made this wonderful creature 'in His Own image'? How shall we sound the depth of this glorious mystery?

Or because we confess it a mystery, should we make no

effort to know it? 'All things pertaining unto life and godliness,' are in their nature mysteries, *i.e.* they are beyond the mere discovery and apprehension of man by his reason. Yet in so far as they are at all 'revealed,' they not only allow but require us to try and understand them. That is *why* God has disclosed those things. But what He still keeps as 'secret things,' it is useless for us to attempt to understand; it is even presumptuous and dangerous. Has God revealed Himself to us that we may know Him? Certainly, in many of these sayings; and therefore we should search them out. This is the most noble use of thought possible, and is its own great reward. Has He revealed to us His purpose in Creation—especially in the creation of us? Yes; for one thing in that most vast and profound saying, '*For Thy pleasure* they are and were created' (Rev. iii. 9, the same thing most plainly declared in various places of the Holy Book), a mystery itself of the most sublime character, which adoring love feels to be full of truth and joy. But has He said this more definitely as to what *we* are to *do* to this end? I think that any one searching the Book through for such information—careful, thoughtful, and alert—might pass on steadily through much which commanded his attention, as touching upon this, until he came to that 'first and great commandment,' etc. Then, pausing upon that passage as just cited at length (p. 101) for much consideration of its substance and of its various words, going about to survey it from various aspects, and to compare it with all else which he had noted in the Book so far, he might say at last, 'I have found it.' Yet he would do well to complete that reading, not unready to entertain anything else thus suggested which ought to change that impression, yet in fact finding all the rest concur in and support it.

I think too—but here I confess to not being on such firm ground of certain truth as the other—that if there were no such disclosure in the Book, any of us seeking together for a theory of the chief purpose of God in creating us such as we are, and the chief purpose which we of our choice should have in living, in proportion as we thought wisely and deeply, should award the palm of most brilliant and profound conjecture to him who maintained that this purpose was to love

the glorious Creator Himself with a devotion that subjugated and absorbed all other purpose.

I believe (if one may be allowed or forgiven this further illustration also) that if there were no possible approach to *known truth* in this, so much even as by conjecture, but a great reward were offered to him who by any masterly ingenuity could *invent* the belief and practice of some first principle and purpose in all men's lives — organising the hearts and habits of all to give the utmost steadiness and strength to everything which we all think good and true, and most repress all evil—that this of loving God with all the heart would in any practically wise and fair judgment receive the award over anything brought in competition. In fact, were we in that case without that 'first and great' of the *Commandments* of the God of love, we should be upon much more solid ground as to those results to adopt this as our principle rather than anything else of the wisest thought or the most magnificent and felicitous conjecture of human genius. For, recurring to that other great revealed mystery of man, as made *in the image of God* (see p. 103, etc.), we should seek to understand our nature and purpose by that,—by research and study of what the One Who is 'All in All' has been graciously pleased to tell us of Himself. Among such sayings we find this very remarkable one, alone and in some aspects unparalleled, which it is not rash, indeed, for us to consider the greatest of those revelations—'God is love' (1 St. John iv. 8). Set this highest vision of God as revealed to men alongside of this first and great commandment of God to men, and then as we hear the voice of the Creator say, 'Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness,' may we not the better understand the nature of this creature and the purpose of the Creator? He makes him with heart, soul, and mind, and he must use these entirely in loving Him Who is love.

But returning to the Great Commandment as such, and happy to find in it all that we need to know and do, let us carefully examine its words, and get from them the utmost possible of their real force. The word 'love' is not an uncertain or arbitrary term. It is primary and simple. Its very 'atomic' and elementary simplicity baffles definition,

for the words we would have to use in defining it are less plain than itself. It can only exist between *persons*, and in the person loving finding his pleasure in the other, and in giving pleasure to the other. No doubt the word is in fact often used of what denotes merely one person's enjoyment or liking; but in these cases we know that to be an inexact and improper application of it. As it is one of the *sacred* words, we should be scrupulous as to this. When applied to that which is really selfish or corrupting, most of all to any ungodly baseness, it is a sacrilege. Selfishness, indeed, is its opposite, so that even the term 'self-love' (not 'as thyself,' for a repression of our selfishness, which is quite another thing), now so rooted in all our 'Ethics,' seems awkward, if not even absurd and mischievous, used as denoting something natural and necessary to mankind.

According to the relations of the loving and loved, and the incidents that may arise, it may involve exquisite pleasure of thought, gracious goodwill, pity, condescension, tender sympathy, generous and resolute action, admiration, awe, gratitude, hope, self-devotion, and joyful obedience. Which of these love manifests, or their proportions, will depend upon the character and relations of the loving and loved.

To 'love with all the heart' never means anything less than a very high degree of this affection, and is most naturally applied to the one chief object of personal devotion. If, however, even this very energetic expression were yet heightened in force by adding 'and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,' we could not mistake the meaning of the utterer. He would thus exclude all approach of rivalry in any other love. Thus we might say in almost any given application of the phrase, 'It is absurd for one of us to have such an overwhelming and absorbing passion for another. It must invade, it must overthrow other sacred duty. It limits to one what should be extended to many. It degrades the one who loves from the dignity of manhood. It deifies a fellow-creature, whose personal merit cannot be equal to such self-abasement of the other. Yes; if a man can rightly love another 'with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength,' this does require a devotion of himself to the other which he can never regard as

excessive, or even sufficient—to which all else good in him or for him will adjust and subject itself—indeed, will be good only as it may be thus adjusted. We must therefore take those words in poetic hyperbole, and not in their actual signification. But shall we thus interpret them as we find them in that sentence of Holy Scripture? To answer this correctly, we do not even need to resort to what is a true principle—that we have no right ever thus to qualify the sayings of Our Lord, or even anything in Holy Writ. But the very reasons for not taking the words literally in any other case are absent here—are, in fact, reversed. This is not fervid and figurative poetry, but the sober answer to a question as to *law*. It is not a case where any dignity of ours or of our kind is in danger. The Person for Whom such love is demanded is equal to and, in fact, far above our greatest, our absolute devotion. He can have no possible rival or competitor for this. And the greater our love for Him, the better for the love we owe to any other person. It excludes nothing else which is good; it essentially includes all that.

It is also essential, if not to any existence, at least to any continuance or any considerable degree of love, that it should be reciprocated; that there should be at least a hope or possibility upon which imagination can work, that the one who is loved will know and value the affection bestowed, and in some way love in return. It may be very unequal, and with quite different manifestations on either side. Anything like equality between the parties is indeed far from necessary. The very greatest personal devotion may, and often does, exist with a conscious or imagined sense of great inferiority to the person beloved,—admiration, tender subjection, and the utter sacrifice of self for the honour or pleasure of one who is looked up to as far above, and even, as it were, as of another order of beings. Everything which in such an instance, real or imagined, admiring and wondering love feeds upon and delights in, is actually in the case before us. There the loving eye does not need to shun any aspect not so favourable to its purpose, while it searches for what to enjoy. Wherever it turns there is wonderful beauty and glory. Every moment has its instance of greatness and graciousness. As to the exquisite pleasure and reward of

love in being noticed and loved in return by such a superior, all comparison fails with Him Whose loving words are only to be compared with His absolute power to grant anything He pleases to promise. All other beauty and felicity around us not only furnishes us with comparisons to utter our admiration of Him, but they are all literally only little glancings of His glory and love. And thus no exaggeration of language is possible on our part in the expression of such an affection, none of the self-reproach of silliness and love-sick extravagance.

The occasions, however just, of love to any other person, are only more reasons for loving Him Who has made these beautiful things as a part of His goodness to us. Where else can there be another such really unapproachable object of admiration? where else any such reasons for the most tender and devoted gratitude? where such gracious pity and condescension towards us? where such magnificence of time and power? such glorious beauty in exhaustless freshness? such faultless purity, justice, and truth, so trusty and trust-worthy, so firm without hardness, so merciful without any weakness?

One might carefully pursue this true thought for a long time in its just applications, and find the conviction growing all the time. It is according to all our best thoughts, that, taking mankind as they are, it would be a noble conjecture that, however otherwise their life had begun, God might have made it the chief reward of goodness in them to be allowed afterwards to love Him with all their hearts, to find this the most glorious possible consummation of the best life one of us could live here. Surely the power of loving other persons—of loving 'with all the heart' some one person—is in our nature? It may be the occasion of great happiness to the one who loves. It may cause a sense of nobleness in that heart. How came there to be this great enjoyment at all? By whose will and action also was this object of my devotion, whatever it is, known to me, and thus loved? And in like manner He is the cause of such high delight to a vast number of others besides myself. What an assemblage of all things that excite love He may, or rather must, then be in Himself! Why may I not love HIM? And then, too, in



what I am told of future, better, and endless life, I am to have just such a love of God, and which will be my perfect happiness. (What a suggestion of my highest nature!) Why may I not begin this now 'with all my heart,' in a more high and true sense than is ever possible toward any other person? Yes; any one else upon whom I may attempt to fix such love, cannot, however passionately I may insist upon it to myself or others, *cannot* but fail such a supreme affection. They may go very far (or die) from me, or I from them. One or the other of these fates is certain some time or other. They may possibly, however desperately I may deny that possibility, become estranged. My own great and noble love may then become as keen a passion of pain as it can be of exquisite pleasure now. But this love of God cannot die, or grow cold, or prove false. It cannot be thwarted by a more fortunate rival. It cannot perish either unknown, unappreciated, or unrequited.

'Thy God.' Those words are very plain. It is a command to each human soul in the secret heart. HE is for thee, 'Thy God,' with a wonderful personal appropriation and affection. This is the simple and self-evident meaning as Our Lord declared it in the Gospel, as Moses spoke and wrote it in the Deuteronomy, and if anything even more plainly in a 'first' Commandment, as we now suppose it. It implies a mysterious and glorious possession of God by a human soul, an appropriation of Him by our love and His love of us which justifies this love in us. No other religion that ever I heard of involves this thought. Some writers have maintained that the Israelites of old time had no other thought of the Lord (Jehovah) as *their* God other than as a national deity, the awful and glorious Champion of their race, in this triumphing over the various other 'gods' who were patrons of the nations that in turn oppressed or contended with them. Thus He was 'thy God' to the Israelites, only just as Dagon was to the Philistine, or Bel to the Babylonian. This was the common idea of Pagans—of many gods, each of whom took some nation under his special protection. It seems inseparable from false religion in some shape or other, perhaps in the modern guise of 'patron saints.' Apparently thus to the Jews of Our Lord's time

Jehovah was 'the God of the Jews only.'<sup>1</sup> But this was only one of the instances in which they were, as He declared,<sup>2</sup> 'blind' to the plain meaning of the very holy words which had been before the eyes of all Israel for a thousand years. Their whole religion denies throughout that there is any other than this true God. A very few other passages which have been claimed to countenance the other idea will be noticed in their places in the course of the succeeding history. As for this appellation of 'Thy God' in the words now before us, let any one read it in the Deuteronomy as Moses wrote it, and he will see that it went with simplicity to the soul of each Israelite who listened, with the assurance that the Great God of Israel, Who had done such wonders for them all, was for *his secret heart* 'thy God,' to be loved in and with all that heart. That this glorious truth was lost from sight by most of that people in perhaps every following age (and degraded to the heathen notion of a national deity) is only in accord with all the rest of their history (and this fact has always had much to correspond with it in the history of Christendom).

This will seem less strange if we will but recall the strangely small, imperfect, and temporary part of that Israel in the transaction of the true religion. The Psalms, as well as passages in the Prophets, furnish most splendid proofs of how such a love of the One and Only God did burn in certain choice souls among that people. And these very words of the Commandment may have struck many another thoughtful and very devout Israelite as having a depth far beyond the general spirit of his people, or even his own conjecture. There is also that true thought to be kept in mind (which we Christians all need, to allay the bitter self-reproach and fear with which we consider how imperfectly at the best we now fulfil that law), that the love of God did really though very feebly exist in all devout and penitent souls, even the many who unhappily did not think of it and strengthen it by such meditation and prayer.

So when this supreme law was proclaimed in the true 'Israel of God,' and by the glorious 'Word of God' Himself in person, it is to be understood by its own very great and yet most simple words, and not at all by the stupid

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xv. 14, etc.

and bitter conceit of those Jews of His time. And when, as now, by His express authority we carry it back to 'the beginning,' all pretence for such a misunderstanding of it falls away. The words come to two innocent and candid souls, between whom and their meaning none of these mists of mistake could intervene. There were no rival nations with their different 'gods'; no 'errors in religion, or viciousness of life'; no gloom of shame and guilty fear in their very worship; no distraction by pain or by the selfish struggle with one another for need or greed, or pride or lust; no conceited ambition of thought or rivalry of argument. In this law of all their life, however made known to them, the thought of 'thy God' was no doubt at least as simple, as well understood, and as welcome to them as it is to any devout soul now.

We must think that this exceedingly energetic amplification of the not so unusual phrase, 'with all thy heart,' is much more than a powerful use of words for impressing the mind. It must be meant to teach us that the matter in question is of a far higher order than other instances in which we may not inaptly speak of loving something or some one 'with all the heart.' But beside their rhetorical force, as a whole—to say that this affection must be the main purpose of our life, we shall do well to look for special meaning in each of the particulars of 'soul,' 'mind,' and 'strength.' In the Word of God, and especially in whatever came from the lips of Our Lord Himself, we may well, without fanciful straining of the sense, believe that every word has its own special force as in no other use of words. We need not insist that this of necessity involves any of the profound reasonings of some Christian scholars as to a threefold nature of man being implied in the Holy Scriptures, though this is more deserving of notice than some are disposed to allow. But as to the words now before us, it is plain that as 'with all the heart' fairly includes our entire personal devotion, so to add 'with all thy soul,' or principle of life, 'and with all thy mind,' or power of thought, and finally, as St. Mark more fully gives it, 'and with all thy strength,' *i.e.* every force of will, that this binds our life together into one supreme and all-including choice and purpose. That, as in St. Mark's account (St. Mark xii. 30), Our Lord should have used two Greek terms—*διανοίας*, *ισχύος*, 'mind' and

'strength'—for the one Hebrew (Deut. vi. 5, *מאד*), for which indeed as an adverb of intensity, used only once beside this as a noun, no other language has a single equivalent,—is a part of the same sublime mystery by which the 'Son over His Own house' (Heb. iii. 5), citing the words of the 'servant,' removes them from the place of comparative obscurity and inferiority, amplifies the language, and sets them in their primitive greatness above 'all the Law and the Prophets,' even as these contained the Ten Commandments, though these Ten Commandments are so far above anything else in the Old Scriptures, as having been uttered with a mighty voice from the top of the great mountain, in the midst of the most sublime scene that a vast assembly of men ever beheld, and after that 'written with the finger of God upon stone.' And the sentence, as Moses spoke and wrote it, is far from being all that Our Lord said. He added: 'This is the first and great Commandment.' That is altogether another thing from His citing a somewhat neglected and misunderstood saying of the Old Law. Nothing like this did Moses add or suggest anywhere else in his writings as to the love of God,—'This is the first and great Commandment.' These words have no parallel in all the rest of the Holy Writings. They are *sui generis*, with a distinct and positive supremacy as to the nature and duty and purpose of mankind to which nothing else can aspire. They disclose the great Commandment as reaching far beyond the limits of those Israelites to whom Moses spoke, and their descendants, and including all mankind. They carry it far back of the Exodus, or of Abraham or Noah, to the very beginning of human life.

Much of the force of this applies also to the other part of this great saying of our Lord: 'And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' To each of these two persons, still remaining 'very good,' as God had made them in His glorious 'image,' there was then but one neighbour, to love whom as one's self there might seem to us no need of any commandment whatever. Certainly there could be no application as for us now in its manifold adjustments and distinctions, while the all-including love of God was as completely a necessity of life for them as for any of their descendants. Yet that this too was in substance

a part of the primitive religion<sup>1</sup> will appear plain upon a careful examination. There is the same mystery of the Word of God (see p. 104) in them both. Our Lord takes this sentence from yet another part of Moses,<sup>2</sup> where it lay comparatively neglected and overlooked for many other precepts, and sets it with that primitive and supreme law of the love of God, as 'a second, and like unto it.' Any second must of necessity be far below that first. It must be really included in it, and what is a part of the infinite is immeasurably less than that whole. Yet He calls it 'like.' In some things it is very unlike. It has not the one, simple, definite, and very great Person as an object. It does not look far above to One Who is incomparable and unchangeable for ever, and Who calls forth from us all of love which addresses itself to a superior, all admiration and adoration. It may be (with us, must be) distributed among many objects and in various degrees, none of them much above us, for, in

‡ The distinction commonly made between religion and 'morals,' as that the one can really exist among men without the other, or that they can be rationally treated of without constant reference to one another, I consider, at least as regards true religion, so artificial, false, and misleading that I do not believe that any supposed 'scientific' necessity or prevailing fashion of thought and argument should impose it at all. It may be harmless, and even useful for some purposes, thus to denote and distinguish 'my duty towards God and my duty towards my neighbour,' but not in the manner referred to, in history or argument. Both these duties alike have their force in the Will and Word of God, and in our nature according to that Will. As the one is 'first and great,' we may conceive of religion without 'morals;' but as the other is only 'second,' we cannot rightly conceive of 'morals' without religion. The utter neglecter of religion, or even the atheist, in a Christian country, who is of exemplary 'morals,' is what he is by force of the beliefs, usages, traditions, and general opinion around him, in which he has lived from childhood, and which are a part of his own life, however unconsciously. All careful study as to how 'character' is formed shows this. No 'fact' to the contrary can be produced until there be some instance shown where a human soul has grown to maturity, just, truthful, chaste, unselfish, patient, and gracious, without any thought whatever of Divine existence or authority in the minds of any who came in contact with the growing character.

By the method which I refuse, we only, for a delusive 'philosophic' purpose, give countenance to the miserable practical atheism (far more mischievous in effect as in amount than the 'theoretical'), which is the great misfortune of us all alike. I propose in this inquiry to follow the actual truth without any reference to such fashions, however prevailing or by what great names upheld. I am quite sure that the history thus pursued with simplicity will be itself the most accurate test as to which of these positions is the true one.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xix. 18.

the nature of the case, they are 'near' us—our fellow-creatures, and of the same order. On the contrary, some or all of them may rather look up to us. Whether or in what degree any are thus near to us does not in the main depend upon our will, but upon various 'circumstances,' as we say—really upon the Will of God. Yet it rests in no small degree upon our own judgment and responsibility to decide as to this nearness. They may be very near for a while, and so the constant occasions of love, and then utterly disappear out of our life. But He is always near and in sight (though always unseen).

These unlikenesses are so great that we need to give the more attention to that in which this Commandment '*is like unto*' the other, and which is surely something very great. We must also keep in mind that we have the Commandment as it comes to mankind in the midst of general selfishness, and after a hundred generations of such habit and tradition, and not as it did to the innocent and loving souls of the first creation. Yet as undoubtedly it was God's Will for them, so in effect it was His Commandment, however made known; and thus most joyfully and happily obeyed, as an action of that love—a part of the primitive religion. Thus it is 'like unto' the other, as a constant principle of life applying at all times to the details of actual duty. Like that it is at hand every moment, and in every doubt or puzzle as to how to obey other commandments of God, 'to make our way plain before us.'

It is 'like unto it,' in being of the very 'nature' of mankind, according to the purpose of God in making them 'in His Own image;' and as it should be their purpose and choice to live, each of them loving the others, as He 'is loving unto every man.' Thus as God, making man what He did, in so doing says to him, 'Love Me with all thy heart,' so also making him what He did, He also says to him, 'Love every one of thy kind in degree as he is near to thee by My Will in providence and commandments, as thyself.' It is thus 'like' the other in being a very spiritual and heart-searching test of our obedience, as against self-deception as well as hypocrisies toward other men.

The occasion upon which Our Lord used it toward the Jews

of His time was their affecting to be devoutly obedient to all the Commandments of God (and thus loving Him) by doing various outward acts (not only of mere ceremony or the smaller matters of detail in the law of Moses, but the greater duties—even the Ten Commandments) in the most bare performance of the letter—really a bare-faced pretence of that and a mere play upon the words. In this they are a striking representation of a like tendency of all men in all ages. And since their hypocrisy lay more in the direction of religious pretence (as that of modern times does in the way of ‘moral’ pretence), so that they would be altogether pleased and satisfied with themselves because punctilious in many little things of religious ceremony, He shows them how utterly unreal this is, by their neglect of one of the chief of God’s Commandments—a matter for which almost every moment of life afforded its opportunities of duty or disobedience,—thus the most frequent and various occasions to act from the love of God. The way in which this teaching was at once followed by the man’s question, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ and the answer he received in the parable of the Good Samaritan, show this most plainly. It disclosed to all those men the fatal *self*-deceit of such false religion. For our age, and in Christendom, the more common instance is still ‘like unto’ that. It is to do some outward acts of ‘good morals’ or kindness to other men, and then fancy that this is all the love which is the fulfilling of the ‘law’ of God, the ‘charity’<sup>1</sup> (*ἀγαπή*, the very same ‘love’ which is in the Lord’s ‘first and great commandment’ as well as in the ‘second’) surviving prophecies and knowledge, and even greater than faith and hope, yet utterly omitting and despising the first of such duties, and thus really missing

<sup>1</sup> One of the few instances in which the Authorised Version does not give the true meaning, partly from our language inheriting the mistake already beginning in the early centuries in the Latin mind and translation of *ἀγαπή* by *c(h)aritas*, to avoid the sensual associations of Pagans with *amor*; and carried still further away from the simple idea of ‘love’ in the artificial theology of the Middle Ages—perhaps in even greater part from the entire transformation of meaning since, in the modern English use of the word ‘charity.’ (Perhaps the Latin false notion was suggested in great part by the morbid aversion to marriage and conjugal love, as being repugnant to the purest love of God, which began so early and grew to such vast proportions.)

the genuine love of our neighbours, which is a part of loving obedience to the chief Object of human love. Thus there are many men who abhor ingratitude, and despise any one to whom they impute it (especially if he be one who does *not* utterly neglect religion), while they themselves are guilty of most icy and stony ingratitude toward the tender and gracious Giver of all they have. They fancy themselves patterns of justice and truth, while they are every moment defrauding the noblest Person of what they owe Him in some return for His gifts of the very things which they are most pleased with themselves for possessing—that is, in fact, of all they have and are.

As to the object of love in this second great Commandment, we must confess that in no other of the modern languages is the original of God's Word less exactly rendered than in our English 'neighbour.' That has the one precise and positive force of *local* nearness of place, without any suggestion of sentiment or even of likeness in kind. But the Greek *πλησίον*, and Hebrew *עֵרֵב*, and its Latin, French, and other such equivalents does mean far more than that.<sup>1</sup> They are predominantly personal rather than local, and readily embrace all that is plainly meant in the Commandment. We need therefore the more carefully to consider the sense as separated from the natural verbal suggestion in our own language.

Read it, then, thus: 'Thou shalt love thy *near one* as thyself.' Then the question, 'Who is my near one?' seems more natural. And so too, according to the great parable story which shows us how we are to apply this law to all occasions of duty, this near one might be an utter stranger and in a strange place (in no actual sense my actual 'neighbour'). But God brings us near to one another this once, and thus arises an opportunity and duty of my doing him good with a warm and tender heart and hands prompt to do and to give. As each of my fellow-men may be thus near me at some time, or in some way or another, I am to have a loving interest in each one of them as the occasion arises. As I love my God with all my heart, I am to be on the look-out for these occasions of His dear service, and search for them eagerly, lest

<sup>1</sup> *Vicinus* = *voisin* = 'neighbour,' and not *proximus* = *prochain*.



my selfishness make me dull of perception and sluggish in such action; that this love may by the 'golden rule' keep me just and kind to all with whom I have to do, careful not to make them unhappy by any passion or heedlessness of mine (or of others, when I can prevent or remedy that), but to add to their enjoyment. And as God's Will brings the bleeding stranger to me only now and then, but puts some in constant and closest nearness and special dependence upon me, in that greater degree am I to love them in the natural relations or closer personal affections of life.

And there is also likeness and unlikeness in the degrees of love commanded: unlikeness, because the object of love in the second is far below that in the first. We have already seen what exaltation, energy, and, as it were, exclusiveness there is in saying, 'with all thy heart,' etc., which are not at all in 'as thyself.' The one will not admit of any comparison or approach; such comparison is the very rule of the other. The one summons me to forget myself utterly in another Person; the other reminds me to think how I regard and treat myself, so that I may do its duty.

An unthinking mind—indeed any of us who are used to setting our own will and pleasure above everything else—will not see this. To such an one 'as thyself' will seem to be an extravagant and impossible rule, than which nothing *could* make a greater demand upon our affection. It is indeed a noble and simple measure for our kindly affection toward fellow-creatures; it has upon it the stamp of a truth far above human invention. Nevertheless, as a measure of love, it is far below the other.

In this respect then, also, this second 'is like unto' the other, in being a heart-searching principle, leaving no excuse or device of selfishness to obscure it, in meeting every occasion that arises, and showing us just what to do to another, by bidding us consider what we would have him do to us in a like case. It is like it in this greatness of including in one sure and plain rule all the many kinds and occasions of duty to fellow-men. This also fairly implies the sanction of God to the love of ourselves, as being also a part of His Will in our nature. Some would smile or even scoff at this as a needless and affected thought. Not so. Our 'instincts' or

supposed necessities in this or like things are suggestions of *truth* only as they suggest the blessed Will of God as He made us. If we find no response or correspondence to any such thing in His Word, we shall be wise to doubt whether our supposed 'reason' about it was not one of the many intellectual illusions which beset us in all such thought when selfishness may at all intervene. And so far from this being to degrade our intelligence, never is man so exalted as in the ardent search to find anywhere the most dear Will of Him to love Whom is in itself incomparable honour.

If this great saying of Our Lord ended here, it would, as it seems to me, be fairly conclusive as describing the nature and purpose of mankind and the first Word of God as it came to them, to teach them the primitive and original religion. But He added also: 'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' There is nothing else like this as to emphasis and exclusiveness in all His sayings, or in all the Holy Scriptures beside. If it is elsewhere declared in them of some one (other) duty or truth, that on it 'hangs,' *i.e.* is dependent, or subject to, or in substance contained in (for all these are included in the original word used), whatever had as yet been written for men by holy prophets under inspiration of God, it has escaped my most careful search. Of course I except from this assertion what is self-evidently in substance the same declaration. But I re-affirm—with a challenge to any one to show it erroneous, whereupon I will promptly confess my mistake—that not only in terms, but in substance, there is nothing like this elsewhere in Holy Writ, which will allow us to call in question that here the Lord Himself sets these two Commandments above all else in our religious knowledge and duty, and as including all else. Let them therefore be allowed that place in the theory and practice and history of our religion.

It is very true that in 'the Sermon on the Mount,' at the beginning of His teaching (some two years before this, for it is generally agreed that this discourse in presence of the Pharisees, in which the two great Commandments occur, was spoken at Jerusalem in the very last days of His life), and in speaking only of conduct toward our fellow-men, He gave the same test and guide as to goodness in such things,

in the golden rule : 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' and adding, 'for this is the Law and the Prophets' (St. Matt. vii. 12). He thus already anticipated in part what He afterwards so much more fully and solemnly declared of all our life. And even then He distinctly set this above all else in the Old Scriptures as to such duties, in this including all that part of the Ten Commandments which it includes. But just before His Passion and Death, in His last teaching as to all the Word of God to man, when He describes all religion, He first most emphatically distinguishes our duty toward God as 'first and great,' and adds, as to the superiority of the two over what else was 'written,' the very significant word 'all.'

Thus His Apostles afterward 'went forth and proclaimed' His Word. St. Paul accordingly says, with his accustomed force and energy (Rom. xiii. 8-10), 'For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended<sup>1</sup> in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling<sup>2</sup> of the law.' (See also Gal. v. 14; Col. iii. 14, as well as St. James ii. 8, with his citing it as 'the King's ("royal") law.'

In St. Paul's justly celebrated description of love ('charity') all that Our Lord declared is of course intended, certainly not excluding what He called 'the first and great.' A like union of the two is to be found in the very simple and beautiful and yet very profound words of St. John (I Epistle *passim*), as to the love of God and of one another. It is also to be noted that the most plain and strong promises of eternal heavenly joy are distinctly for 'those who love God' (I Cor. ii. 9; St. James i. 12).

That we can even now so much aspire to and advance toward this all-mastering love of God, with the sure hope of

<sup>1</sup> ἀνακεφαλαιούται, rather, 'summed up.'

<sup>2</sup> πληρωμα, rather, 'completeness,' or 'perfection.' My impression is that we generally assume 'fulfil' as to law, to mean merely perform, thus missing the power and depth of πληρωω as illustrated in the Gnostic errors about Pleroma, etc.

completely achieving it in that other life, is proof how entirely natural it was for *innocent* man. So also is the fact that, together with the other 'like unto it,' it is the one master-key to every actual duty, great or small—a solvent of every practical puzzle of this, 'Ought I to do this or that?' But I admit that no one can really believe this who thinks that, in the nature of things, love cannot be really commanded. And that is a very common sentiment, generally accepted as a self-evident truth. But how can we be so sure of that? I suppose the prevailing idea comes, for one thing, from our all being aware that none of us can absolutely know that secret sentiment of another in which love consists. So all that one of us can exact of another by authority is some words or outward acts, to which the heart may not at all correspond. Such constraint may even react to cause dislike, and the sense of oppression may create loathing instead of love. With this goes also the thoughts of 'rights' and individual 'freedom,' which is supposed to be invaded by such a 'command.' In what does any true freedom consist? and what are our 'rights'? Each of us has indeed a 'sense of right,' which, whether we suppose it a mere instinct, like the timidity of a sheep, or the general result of what we have been told or thought out for ourselves as to justice between men, is very strong. Our real 'rights' must be according to our nature; and, according to that nature, others have no more right to invade our 'rights' than we theirs.

But how came this to be our nature and theirs? Neither we nor they made it such. Or shall we think that no one made it—that it existed by succession eternally and of itself, as God does; 'just so,' as some unintelligent persons will obstinately insist upon something for which they can give no reason? To say this in effect is precisely the same as to say it in so many words, *i.e.* it is the irrational and monstrous obstinacy of atheism.

No, certainly; our 'nature' is what our Maker chose to make us. Men have rights and duties toward one another simply as it was the Will of God to create them so. But these rights have no possible existence toward Him, and as against His Will. There is then really nothing of that kind

whatever to stand between us and any expression of God's Will by a commandment.

It may be possible for us (though I doubt it) rationally to conceive that He made the creature man with some personal 'rights' which He Himself must not invade. Yet that would be at the best a mere conjecture, some men's inference from what they suppose to be the nature of our free-will, but more likely one of the sophisms of human pride. There is nothing like it in the Book of God. Many of its plain sayings, and all of its spirit, are quite against the notion, as it seems to me (the great book of Job throughout). For, utterly unlike what we may insist against the tyranny of 'personal government' by fellow-men, to which we must oppose personal rights, our far better and perfect safety is in the justice and grace of His righteous love.

Yet even then it could not be one of those 'rights,' that a man need love God only as he 'spontaneously' chose to, and might refuse it if commanded. In this case the opposition is supposed against that very commandment of God which expresses His whole will and purpose in creating us at first or at all continuing us in existence.

Therefore no man has any such liberty not to love God, which is invaded by a commandment to do so. He has liberty in that sublime and awful sense of responsibility, that he can perversely choose to do just what he was made *not* to do, and may so ruin himself. But that is no 'right' of his. I suppose that no one will say that a man has a 'right' to take his own life because he has that physical power, or that his 'liberty' is infringed by a law which forbids that? nor that he is wronged by a Higher Power, in that, when he desires to be almighty, he cannot have his way about that? If it be said of both these things that his 'nature' is against them, that is true in just the sense that God did not make him to do this or to be that. But on the other hand, as we have seen, He did make each man to love Him with all his heart, and this not merely as one of many purposes of his existence, but as the one only one.

How senseless and even how base it would be, then, to revolt against this necessity, and to insist that our unchained and indomitable souls shall not be forced to love this despot ;

to say that if He would ask our love we might accord it, but not if commanded ; our thoughts and affections are free, and will resist and defy Him for ever. The meanest insolence of an ungrateful little child was never so ridiculous and detestable as such rejection of 'the first and great Commandment' upon the ground of liberty and right.

But this repugnance to the Commandment of love does not lie after all so much in any reasonings of men thus to be met by argument, as it does in a pervading feeling. Yet general feeling among men about such things is no such proof of our 'nature' teaching us truth, as it is common to assume. We shall soon see that this feeling may be altogether a morbid after-growth of what was not in man as God first made him. Much of such fictitious and unwholesome sentiment promoted by some poets and romance-writers has helped to obscure the judgment of mankind with the notion that authority is the natural enemy of love ; that the latter is always at least enhanced and beautified by revolt against the other. Of the 'many inventions' which men have 'sought out' in all the generations after the first, this might, for its ingenious malice and seductive mischief, have been first suggested to them by those unhappy enemies of God and of us, who, even before the fall of man, 'kept not *their* first estate.'

But in any case, and as suggested in whatever way, it is promoted by the fact already alluded to, that the unloving selfishness of men does often attempt to exact love from another by force, as a gratification of pride and selfish desire, whether sensual or intellectual. Yet that does not prove that love may not be rightly commanded even as between us fellow-creatures. (With the greatest inconsistency, those who object most to that which is 'first and great' as a commandment will quite commend 'the other' as a law—the supreme and entire law for mankind. Yet all the instances of objection to any commandment of love must be drawn from that. And who made that law or gave that commandment ? Or is the concealed fallacy in a repugnance to being commanded by some one to love *him* ?—absurdly supposing that there is any parallel between the self-will of one of our fellow-creatures and such a command of the

Eternal Lord Who is love itself.) There is surely something exaggerated and unwholesome in the growing spirit of individual self-government—'liberty,' it is called—in our time, in secular matters and social relations. Is not this in great part mere pride and self-assertion, which calls itself a noble spirit of independence, and affects to prefer being miserable without a superior to being happy in any state which requires obedience?

Yet, however excusable this may be (or even praiseworthy) in some cases, as the reaction and recovery from a servile spirit toward oppression by our fellow-men, it is only less irrational than it is wicked as to God. Indeed, if we all simply accept and obey these two Commandments, that will put an end to all this arrogance and oppression, and every sort of injustice between men. Such obedience is the only thing that ever did in some measure control those evils, or that ever will or can entirely remove them.

But only to hear that Voice say, 'This is the first and great Commandment,' should decide us to reconsider our opinion, however positive, that love cannot be rightly commanded. What voice is that?—Of false sentiment? of inexact rhetoric? of the guesswork of ambitious theory? of selfish or wanton injustice armed with power? Certainly, unless we mean to insist that we cannot be mistaken, even when our opinion (call it 'conscience,' or 'moral sense,' or 'reason,' or 'sense of justice,' or 'verifying faculty,' or what not) is exactly opposed to what God tells us—certainly, if we may be possibly mistaken in this, it becomes us to pause and reconsider that opinion.

Upon what is it founded? Upon a comparison of what one of us creatures has to do with the others, and often not a wise understanding of that, because mixed more or less with that unhappy pride and spirit of restless disobedience which somewhat infects all our judgments as well as conduct. As an illustration, what is plainer in the way of positive command than this: 'Husbands, love your wives'? Yet what passes now in Christendom (extensively, if not generally) for the most refined sentiment, assumes that in this relation any great love exists only for a little while after marriage, as the lingering warmth of an ardent feeling, which was natural

between two young persons before marriage, this afterward subsiding into a tepid kindness toward the house-keeper and 'house-mother,' whose greatest possible success will be in keeping the husband from not really loving some other woman. (At least, any demonstration of more than this on the part of either husband or wife is to be taken by others for artifice, or, if really sincere, must hide itself with shame-faced care from the derision of all quick-witted people.) It supposes that to really command in this case would of course react to turn indifference into dislike, and would almost compel the unhappy man to take refuge in an unlawful passion. Plainly the New Testament knows nothing of this. It has this simple command, 'Husbands, love your wives;' and, as any real, noble love which there was at first would construe it, 'love them more and more, as time adds to all the memories and associations most worthy of a *man*.' Our common sense, if we would really consult it, approves this. For we know that we are no such noble creatures as have a right to be affronted at commands of duty, excused from doing what we ought to do, or less likely to do it because we are by an unquestionable superior *told* to do it.

[In this I am *not* speaking of those miserable corruptors of society, and the many who are in fact influenced by them, who, in the guise of exalted sentiment, by poetry or romance, disparage the sense of duty in personal love as 'cold and hard,' 'conventional,' and the like, whereas duty in love is the only safeguard against universal selfishness, against the most cold-hearted trifling, and the fiercest brutality and rapacity. I am expostulating with those who, while they recoil from this, yet suppose the merely 'spontaneous' and sentimental in love to be much above what finds its highest excellence in God's Commandment. Let them think again. Is not all that is most beautiful *and true* in romance exalted by love of the Author of all beauty? will not any noble affection be the safer from fitfulness, fickleness, forgetfulness, and inconstancy—will it not be the more sensitive, delicate, and tender in sympathy and in demonstration—the more strong, patient, and fearless in act, for being constantly and consciously included in the obedient love of God?]

In general, this written Word of God has no allowance



whatever for such a thought on the part of men. It is full of the noblest spirit of dignity and courage in refusing to cringe before the 'proud and haughty scorner,' or the terrors of an oppressor, whether of a bad government or of the rich or 'influential' who may exercise such tyranny among what we call a 'free people.' It has, in fact, raised men to more greatness of soul in that way that all other writings extant. But it does simply *command* us to love. Take another plain instance of this among many such. Our Most Gracious Lord and Saviour says distinctly, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye (all Christians) love one another.' This is a very striking instance to show that, so far from a duty to love being one that should not be commanded, we might reasonably wonder if it were not. Such as we are (all of us, and not merely the weak and dull, whom we may fancy to be so unlike us as to high thoughts), a commandment of God is the very form in which what is so necessary all through our life will come in the way most for our good.

And will any mortal of us all, when He gives this Commandment, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' reply, 'Great sir—for I cannot deny that in some respects you are great—I cannot love you in obedience to a commandment. Withdraw that, and you may secure my spontaneous affection. Ask me, allure me, coax me by various motives. Attack my gratitude. Or Thou, as Word of God, touch my pity by an eloquent account of Thy sufferings here as "a Man of sorrows." Who knows what sentimental emotion may then begin, and, as our proverb says, pass into the love which is akin to pity? But I am too noble and high-spirited to be driven into it, or commanded about it. That rouses my resistance, and deprives you of the desired feeling on my part.'

Yet this very preposterous attitude of a man before God is what so many think, if they do not say, is to be admired. And they think that, if to surrender this position is necessary for his safety, it is an abject and dishonouring necessity.

'But love is not a matter of mere choice: just as, if I am very wretched, and you command me to be happy, I *cannot* obey you; or, if I have a cruel toothache, you can no more expect to stop this by commanding me not to suffer than

you can make water wine in the same way.' Nay, but that suggests that there is One Who can, and it is of His commandments that we are inquiring now. Yet in truth that was not a real command to a person who had a will to choose, and so really to obey. But however self-evident this may have seemed to you, that love cannot be a matter of obedience; and however true may *seem* the comparison of our not ceasing to suffer because commanded not to suffer, there is certainly somewhere in that argument a great untruth. It is a *fact* that any good father or mother ought to, and can, cultivate mutual love among their children by commanding it, not merely by commending or recommending, by arguments and illustrations of its excellence and usefulness, but, besides all this, and most effectually, by insisting upon it with authority. That puts a check upon the thoughtlessness and a curb upon the selfish passion, which nothing else can supply, to form those habits of affection which build up a great and beautiful character. This turns the balance in favour of the naturally good, struggling against the natively bad in that character, as it is 'setting' its form in the fresh mould. Love is not a mere involuntary sensation like pain. In its very nature it is bound up with our freedom of choice; will is of its very substance. And as it is of man's true nature to love God, which he himself has somehow come to thwart by a perverse will, so he now has the opportunity by the penitent choice of his will obeying this Commandment, to be saved from that destruction. Indeed, if there be no question of will in love—of obedience or disobedience to God's Commandments,—why have not mankind always perfectly loved God? how came they ever to their most wretched degradation, into this woful plight of not loving what is altogether lovable?

'Yet,' may some one say, 'though it be no "right" which we could demand, would it not be a more noble and beautiful thing for us, and more to the honour of God, that we should love without command?' This, too, is an illusion of thought. Why should that be so? Such love is either according to God's Will or not; yes or no. If no, it is bad; if yes, then God's Will made known to us as to our acts *is* commandment. It is our honour and joy to know that Will;

‘For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments; and His Commandments are not grievous.’

If we are not more than content—quite overjoyed—at this all but incredible privilege and felicity of any one below the Great God Himself, then we *can* insist upon being ‘as gods’ ourselves. But this, so far from being a strong and noble aspiration, is the wild weakness of delirium. It is, if I understand him, what Goethe means to represent by Faust, especially in the wonderful soliloquy at the beginning, a thought which the poet secretly admires, as well as expects his reader to, and which *does* speak for some of the most admired intellectual ambition of our age. By all means let us keep ourselves free from such a silly and wicked infatuation. Though with this grotesque but horrible strabismus, a man may fancy that he is looking and pressing upward, while he is in fact pushing from one lowest deep of dishonour to another lower yet—let us really look upward and listen to the Voice from above. By a most sublime mystery of graciousness God does now *ask* men to love Him. And these are not innocent men, just made in the freshness and perfection of His Own image, but degraded, perverse, and guilty men, saturated with the sins of many successive generations of ungodly life. Yet that does not cancel the law of love written in the heart of man by the first Commandment, and his nature answering to it, and by tradition and memory ever since—by His later Word of the Old Testament, and the ‘gracious words’ of the Gospel which fell from those very lips. Such loving ‘service is perfect freedom,’ but it is none the less our humble service. Its glory, indeed, consists in humiliation before Another, instead of gratified pride. But is not that the right position for us? In fact there are men who with loftiness of soul would neither in thought nor act swerve before any human or devilish tyranny or terror, who yet listen with loving joy for any ‘commandment of God.’ Above all, they give most prompt and happy obedience to this, of loving Him with all the heart.

‘Then you would make man at his best but a loving machine?’ Yes, if you will have it so. And is not this nobler than for him to be a ‘free’ monster of self-will and

ingratitude, for this is the necessary alternative? They who prefer that would ascribe to men (or rather to themselves and perhaps a few others, for the mass of us are of no account in their thought), an absolute will—which is impossible—and really deny all Will to Him Who alone is absolute, making of *Him* the mere name for a huge machine upon which such men (and devils) may try their ambitious ingenuities.

The great saying of St. Paul, 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price,' excludes this notion of our dignity in independence of God. To be sure he is speaking then of a redemption—buying us out of a bondage to Satan, in which man was not at first as God made him. And so we belong to Him Who paid that ransom. But this did not transfer us from one wrongful servitude to another, but restored us to our original freedom. And that freedom is in belonging to God in the perfect, obedient love for which we were made. To each of us this obligation is indeed heightened now by a new gratitude to the Divine Redeemer. And so (in a wonderful mystery) may that primitive and all-including love toward God, full of thanksgivings for incessant blessings, have now added to it an even greater gratitude.

We ought to be very careful of keeping close to all this truth just as our Lord teaches it, and returning to it in simplicity from any erroneous notions of ourselves or others; otherwise, what was first said with a pious intention, yet in error, and afterwards repeated or imitated in a like spirit, may be fixed by hallowed associations in our minds as that truth. I have now in my mind two such instances in the words of two of our most Christian poets. The one is where Milton speaks of doing all as under 'the great Taskmaster's eye,' and the other Wordsworth's 'Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God.' The one was meant, and is often quoted, to remind us that we are in the very sight of God our Lord and Saviour in all our doings; the other of the lofty and noble authority of that voice which tells us what we ought to do, even when other voices, of pleasure or desire, call elsewhere. Yet each of these is aside from and far less useful or beautiful than the simple Divine truth. 'Taskmaster' is certainly a very infelicitous word, not only implying a stern vigilance exercised upon the indolent eye-servant, but even

injustice and oppression toward him. For, to say nothing else, the only use of the word in that which is our real pattern of religious language is as to the 'cruel bondage' in Egypt. In this 'glorious liberty of the sons of God' under the true law, we read,<sup>1</sup> 'Wherefore thou art no more a slave,<sup>2</sup> but a son'—to love with all the heart, therefore to 'serve with all the heart and both the hands.' Not an equal indeed, graciously and generously exchanging affections with the other; for neither could we so love our equal, nor can He have an equal.

A like mistake is involved in speaking of 'Duty' as the 'stern daughter,' etc. Such an apostrophe to the word is, no doubt unconsciously, a part of that Paganism which still lingers in English poetry, and even common thought. Duty, so far as it has a Christian—that is, any true—meaning, is *what we ought to do*; and in its highest, simplest, and truest thought is equivalent to the Will of God, as we should obey that with love. It is at least a question whether we do not deviate and descend from that truth for the sake of a supposed verbal prettiness in calling it a 'daughter of the voice of God';<sup>3</sup> whether what in one way is taken for a mere figure of speech, suitable or not, may not be rather in effect the notion of another *person*—a daughter goddess. But any way, the description of true duty as 'stern' is far beside and below the truth. It would promote the tendency, much too common, of separating the thought of duty, whether public and patriotic, or of personal justice and truth, or of home affections, from personal service of God. The 'voice' of rebuke to our weak perverseness may for our good sometimes well need to be stern. But to apply this term to our true duty in the love of God is most false and mischievous. That in its nature, and as ever to be kept in our thoughts, is the very opposite of stern—is sweet, tender, and gracious.

The arguments and illustrations so far used are, I admit, and of necessity, almost entirely drawn from the present state of mankind, very different in many ways from that of the first

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Unquestionably the equivalent of δούλος. The 'bond-servant' of the Revision seems a sort of sentimental evasion.

<sup>3</sup> Whatever that may possibly mean—hardly in allusion to the Rabbinical Hebrew 'Bath-kol.'

two, as well as we can understand that now. But I think that the after-history will, as we follow it, show that, *a fortiori*, their application to this inquiry is just. (Other such might be added to make it yet plainer that the only reasonable opinion as to the primitive religion is, that it was embraced in these two commandments of love. For instance, it may be asked whether the love of children for parents, or of parents for children, is any the less real love, or any the less admirable as such, because in its nature it cannot be 'spontaneous,' as separated from obligation, and a necessity of our life and nature. Will any one reply that this is 'natural,' and so does not come within the scope of freedom? And is any love excellent that is *not* natural? And is not the relation of each one of us to the great Creator *at least* as 'natural' and necessary an one? This is just as true in the love of that relation in which, though individual choice by the Divine mystery of human free-will enters as a part, it is expressly between 'those whom God has joined together.')

The notion really opposed to this, as already noticed, threatens all the securities of social order. Even now it revolts against conjugal and even filial obedience as a degrading oppression. But be that as it may, objections of this kind to the first and great commandment of God can only come from that wretched distemper of the soul—pride,—common enough to us all, and to be cured by wiser thoughts. It is a disease that is only aggravated by any indulgence. Thus those who are themselves too wise and devout to be misled in this way are very unwise in trying to allure other men to piety by any concessions of this truth to human pride. Even so spiritual and profound a commentator as Olshausen is carried off by the 'philosophic' tendency into saying (*in loco* Matt. xxii. 37, etc.), 'Under the *form* of a *command*, which appears contrary to its nature, since it is the freest activity of life,' etc., and 'whilst love to God on the part of man appears negative, love to man appears positive,' etc. For my own part, I cannot imagine anything less negative or more positive than a true love of God.

There is nothing in the words of the original languages, either the Greek or Hebrew, to take off from the direct force of our English, or to suggest a vague figurative sense instead

of the simple one of love. It is just the contrary. The terms used by Our Lord and His prophets are the same as those which denote the youthful and romantic, the ardent conjugal, the mother's or child's love. It was long after this inspiration ceased that, as already noted, the Latin distinctions (from *amor, amare*) of *charitas* and *diligere* began to appear, and their modern imitations.

Then, as Christians, we must accept and believe Our Lord's words. We must take them in all their breadth of application, and from the very beginning, and without end. They are as broad as all our life, without any qualifications or exceptions. They begin when man begins, and will cease only if he ceases to be.

All these considerations are conclusive as to what the nature of man is, as God made him for a certain purpose. To reject this conclusion, we must deny that man was made to love at all—which denial by all experience would be false,—or that he can thus love *God* at all—which is equally evidently untrue in fact, for some men do love Him. Yet allow any such love as having possible existence, and it must be rightly supreme over all other personal affections (for what can compare with it either in the object or the obligation?) yet would exclude no other good love, but include and even exalt all such, as they could not be apart from it.

Yet all these reasonings are the least of its claims to our belief. The great and all-sufficient proof is this: 'Hear also what Our Lord Jesus Christ saith: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as and thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law the prophets.' Is there anything else like this in all the terms of supreme authority and of universal application?

## CHAPTER VI.

### LANGUAGE AND ITS ORIGIN.

SOME insist that it is so much more reasonable to think that whatever man needed to know must have come by some slow process of observation and thought, that we must have most explicit historical information of any other beginning of knowledge, or even that any such proof is, in the nature of things, impossible; that whatever we take for this is an illusion of thought or prejudice of weak bigotry. But is there any such reasonable presumption? Upon what is it founded? Is it suggested by anything in the lower life by which we are surrounded—though, if so, that would be far from conclusive—or by any analogy in our own physical life? Is it so from the fact that the personal life of each of us begins in helpless ignorance, and proceeds to all knowledge by slow steps of thinking and experience? But no. The more usual rule is quite to the contrary, and is to this effect—that whatever is necessary to any such life, to its immediate purpose, is supplied to it at once, as the instincts of movement and feeding to the new-hatched chick, and of suckling to the infant mammal. That he should love God being what man was made for—all other things being only incident to that,—whatever was essential to that would be at once supplied. That the actual human infant is not so supplied with this knowledge is no objection to this, for his infant state is not of the essentials of human nature: witness these first two of our kind. It is of the conditions under which other generations were to follow; (the infant is not yet completely in that nature, but in transition to it.) In fact, he is analogously so supplied by the religion of the former generation communicated to him, by degrees, as his mind and spirit develop for it. So if it were at all a matter of present speculation as to how



this knowledge of religion came first to men, it would be a wiser hypothesis that it was supplied to them at once by Divine teaching, as it has since passed to each following generation by means of human teaching.

Without now pursuing this view further, though every successive step would make it more certain, we may assume that the wonderful creature man was at once informed by his Creator about himself and his own nature, so far as such knowledge was necessary to the purpose of his existence. The unreasonableness of the other assumption will appear, for one thing, in that it would virtually require of the first pair precisely the same beginning of life as to each of us; whereas, by the very fact of their being first, there could be no such beginning for them. Or if we release it from that absurdity, and allow it to assume their life as beginning like the new-born child's, we are met by a like absurdity, that there was for them no parental nourishment and care for the years that must in that case intervene for the passage from infancy to self-maintenance. Equally absurd, if not really more evidently so, is the assumption, utterly gratuitous as to history or reason, that the full-grown man and woman must begin with the infant's, or rather the brute's, ignorance of the very things without knowing which there can be no full human life. If we could with any reason concede this as a fact, we should be no nearer connecting this with the actual human life around us.<sup>1</sup> If such huge infants, looking at one another without any more thought of the Creator and of what they had to do with Him than the brutes around them, were ever to get this knowledge by their own thoughts, *when* would they ever do so? or *how*? As a matter of fair inference from what we do know, I should say, Never. I cannot see the first step possible in that direction, or any progress. In fact, those who suppose the thoughts of religion to be the achievement of men's notice of Nature around and within them, when they undertake at all to describe the process, make it one of very remote and feeble beginnings and slow

<sup>1</sup> See Leland's *View of Deistical Writers, etc.*, Let. xxx., including an admission by Lord Bolingbroke, that "supposing the world to have had a beginning in time, etc. . . . we must of necessity assume that the first man and the first woman . . . were produced in full strength and vigour of body and mind."

progress. Such as try to be more precise about it assume many successive generations of such advance before any actual religion appears, and many more yet for that which is generally recognised as at all rational. In this we have a partial admission of what is more probable yet, namely, that if religion were not directly taught to the human being, the conception of a superior spiritual person for him to worship were not first put in his mind from without, he never would bethink him of this at all.

For we are not left (and never were) to such a beginning of religion, or to such conjectures and hypotheses about it. We have direct information,—positive history. It is not indeed human history, in the nature of the case; not even the very best of that. But none the less is it better history yet. An African savage would not be wise to doubt and reject all accounts of his own people in former ages, because not coming to him from one of his tribe, but from the great scholars of civilisation. Much better for us, then, if we might have it—far better than this comparison can represent, is a history of man given him by God Himself. And such we have.

According to that history, man did then know (not merely know of, but personally *know*) God. Our English tongue, for a language usually so distinguished for its clearness of common sense, is strangely deficient in having only this one word 'know' to represent two quite distinct though kindred thoughts: of knowledge of things in general, and of acquaintance with persons. The German *wissen* and *kennen*, even the French *savoir* and *connaître*, make this distinction clearly enough. But we can escape from ambiguity of language (such an almost certain cause of erroneous thought) only by continually observing and stating the difference. In nothing is this erroneous tendency greater and in effect more harmful than as to knowing God. One way to correct the ambiguity, when it is at all a question as to knowledge of persons, is to say, for the one case, 'I know *of* him,' and for the other and higher instance, simply 'I know him.' Thus, in order to love a person—above all, for that essential of human life, to love God,—it is far from enough to know *of* Him—to have information of there being such a Person, without that personal acquaintance and intercourse which, while in fact needful to

any accurate knowledge of any other person, is so above all for one of us as to Him. Here is where all 'philosophy,' even in the form of a Christian theology, utterly fails as knowledge of God. There is a coldness of unreality about it, which makes the 'Great Name' scarcely more than one of the pawns in a game of dialectics, or the  $x$  or  $y$  in an algebraic formula. Such 'Theism' as that is almost as 'agnostic' as any professed Atheism, and in fact works even more mischief, for it *seems* to satisfy the needs of religion without really doing so.

The Divine history has nothing of the sort. It does not represent men as coming at this abstract knowledge of the Divine by mental processes, either swift or slow. It introduces us to the first of our kind as beginning life with a personal knowledge and intercourse of the Eternal Lord and Maker. This is evidently the direct communication and introduction of Himself to them, according to His purpose in making them creatures to love Him. Thus we have the greatest religion at once. Of course this involves some idea of what He really is; that He is the One and Only Eternal; existing of Himself, without cause, without beginning, and without end; that He is the cause of all else by His Will, which is the only absolute will that can be, for any other would only begin and continue as He chose; that He is all power, beauty, life, and goodness—everything else being what He chooses to make and keep in existence; and also, that of all this mundane creation, we of mankind stand in a special relation to the Creator, in being made to know and love Him with that free choice in which He has made us, as it were, 'after His Own likeness.'

I know no phrase which better comprehends this primary thought of true religion than that in which our worship addresses Him, in its most solemn appeal to His mercy, 'Maker of all things, Judge of all men.' In this He is beheld as the sole Creator of us, and all we know, and as observing our use of free-will, and awarding our final destiny, according as we 'love Him and keep His commandments.'

It is altogether reasonable to suppose that this primitive knowledge included some apprehension of that truth about God, which we now know as 'the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious

Trinity, three Persons and one God.' We have indeed a view of this through the redemption of sinners, which was impossible for them. But we have no right, for that reason, to be sure that they had not another glimpse of this, such as they who have never known (or known of) sin, may have. How of the Holy Angels, to whom surely there are Divine mysteries, as we know in that wonderful saying, 'which things the angels desire to look into'? We should be exceedingly irrational to allow the thought that there was no Trinity until man fell, and needed 'a Saviour, the Man Christ Jesus.' So when the glorious spirits of Heaven, and the innocent first of our line, just made in His image, knew and loved God, they knew Him as the One in Three and the Three in One. And this is the only reasonable conjecture for the original of this tradition of a Trinity in God, which survives in so many false religions more distinctly even than in the one which afterwards best represented the true.

Such a gleam of this truth there seems also to be (without pressing this too far in positive argument) in the mysterious words, 'Let Us make man,' etc. Made known even more distinctly than, it seems to be, in that most venerable name of the Great One as 'Elohim' or 'the Mighties,' a common plural noun in occasional use, yet by all tests as distinctly a proper personal name as any in that language. Neither of the other conjectures as to this mysterious solecism sometimes given seems so rational as this: either that which supposes it to have begun as one of those affectations of human speech by which persons in high places of power speak and are addressed in the plural number (as now in all the modern tongues every one is thus addressed), or the other, which supposes this Name of God to have come by transition from an earlier polytheism. Both of these are unsatisfactory in themselves—for one thing, which is sufficient by itself, as being contrary to historic fact. They reverse the probable and actual order of these very things in time, and make that which grew out of later inventions the cause of what was simple and primitive. We shall see this fully in its place in the subsequent history.

This also brings forward another fact as to the primitive religion, viz., the power and use of language as a part of it.

The history in Genesis implies this primitive use of speech as plainly as if it said in so many words, 'And Adam and his wife began to use language, and to understand it when heard by them.' Precisely equivalent to this is its account of God's speaking to them, and their speaking to Him and to one another. I make no account of the theories of some, that all this is an 'allegory' of something else. (See *supra*, p. 51, etc.) The Book of God itself does not tell us that it was such an allegory, but gives it as the beginning of a literal history, which continues afterward without any suggestion of transition from what is imaginative to what is actual. Besides this, no one can give an account of what the allegory, if such, does mean, which can command general assent, and would make it of any use for our instruction. The history, received in its natural meaning, is not altogether within our comprehension in all of its details. And this is just what we should reasonably expect in such a history. Within five or six pages of any ordinary book is a relation of the most momentous things that happened in all the first 1600 years, affecting ten thousand millions of mankind, and involving the most profound and yet the most practical questions of all human life. They are matters which have engaged and yet altogether baffled the ingenuity of the most intelligent and acute men ever since. Without doubt, this brief story has incidents which mean far more than we are any of us able now to see. If that is just what any one means by saying that this relation of the events in Eden is allegorical, he may be but uttering a truth which I also recognise. But his error is in supposing that our want of comprehension of every detail makes it all a puzzle set before us to baffle plain people, and to call out the guesses of the more ingenious, and thus denying the historic truth of the facts which are plainly given for our knowing. Why not gratefully know that much, and also acknowledge the simple truth that we cannot now understand the rest, because God has not pleased to make us with such power of comprehension. This gives us a noble and sweet lesson of humility. It is the constant folly of philosophy virtually to deny this, even when in the form of 'Christian philosophy' it allows it. These plain facts are revealed in the history, and 'belong unto us and to our children';

the others are 'the hidden things,' and 'belong unto God.' Perhaps they may be by us Christians searched out in a humble and reverent use of the later and complete 'revelation' of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in harmony with, as the extension of—certainly *not* to *contradict*—those other facts which He has been graciously pleased to reveal 'from the beginning.'

Suppose we try and imagine a religion without language. I do not comprehend in this the really unimaginable and (to use one of their own new-coined terms) 'unthinkable' use of the term 'religion,' as some vague sentiment, without any personal object (or subject either, for that matter), which is more consistent with atheism than with devotion. That is of necessity a mere unwholesome verbal fiction, used by some to deceive and quiet their own or others' souls. But we are to try and imagine an actual religion, without prayer or praise; without the social union of worshippers, or even the expression of its adoration by the solitary soul, and without any 'Word of God' to the worshipper; *probably* without any possible thought of God, or of *spirit*, or of *love*. For I hold it to be next to demonstrated, if not quite so, by those who have best considered these things, that no thought above that of the brute as to what he sees and feels is possible without the use of words. (See the whole unanswerable argument of the Nominalists, and really of Plato before them, as well as Berkeley after them.) So if we try to conceive of the first human pair as without language, we inevitably degrade them for the time (even as to their converse with one another) to a place far below the rudest savage men now living. Of course, whoever looks to the current notions of the 'evolutionists' of our day for the highest truth about our race sees no harm in that. But it will as much of course be rejected by whosoever firmly believes that God made Adam in His Own image and likeness, and that the Genesis gives a true account of the first human life.

In like manner, this history of God speaking to them and of their own use of language, alone agrees with their being made to love and worship Him. It is safe to say further that if the history did *not* relate this, profound thought might

well be puzzled at that silence, and would find it a far greater difficulty of reason in the primitive religion than any which are objected to this. It is a strange illustration of the weakness and narrowness of human intelligence, that we find it so hard to believe that God made man at once with the power of speech, and both uttering and understanding words necessary for his life, as even more spiritual than intellectual. What an absurd contradiction is this of our professed belief that He is the Almighty Creator of all!

Just what those primary communicated words were, of course, we do not know. We may be sure that among them were the Names of God and man, of Heaven and earth, as also the verbs to *be*, to *know*, to *love*, to *fear*, to *speak*, to *obey*, etc., and all else necessary to the uses of speech in his essential life and nature. Thus only, as all other analogies show, with such 'a start in the business,' as it were, and small 'stock-in-trade,' of words, could man begin those processes of thought by which language is enlarged and varied. There is, in fact, far less difficulty of connecting this in thought with the later process of changing and combining words, or of inventing new ones as the uses of speech extend, than of adjusting it to the gratuitous and irreligious fiction that human life began without any more speech than the horse. The order of the facts about language in the Divine history suggests the same.

It is after God has spoken to man that names are first given to the animals. We might reason that, whatever the beginnings of speech, man, surrounded by other living creatures, would soon contrive names for them. But we have the very remarkable *fact* related, that God 'brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.' Thus much, at least, these words inform us, that the first man did fix names—words of appellation—upon each kind of living creatures which he saw. As this, too, if it stood alone, explicitly informs us of the possession of language, then so also, I think, it fairly implies, besides the evident reason of the thing as already stated, that the other names known before were not in any way of man's devising, but given to him by his Maker, as much as such names now come to a

child just beginning to talk; the names, *e.g.* of *God* and of the *man* himself. What corroborates this is that while the first mention of Adam is in the saying of the Creator, 'Let Us make,' etc., that of the woman is in the *man's* saying, 'She shall be called *Ish-ah*' (=man-ah), implying that he was already in possession of the word *ish* (man) as a common noun synonym of his proper name, *Adam*. So also he afterwards gives her a proper name *Havah* (Eve), corresponding to his own.

This understanding of the Divine history as informing us that language was given directly to man by God was accepted by the greatest Christian scholars until the present generation. But it is now confidently and positively dismissed by those who represent accepted results of learning and thought as one of the mistakes of the past. They are so certain of this that they treat it as no longer a matter of discussion. If I thought so upon a careful reading of what they say, and weighing the reasons they give for it, I should not, of course, state the matter as I have. But I shall now give my reasons for not accepting theirs.

It does not follow, as a matter of course, that the one conclusion is true because it is the later, any more than that the Koran is, for the same reason, the book of God rather than the Gospel. Leibig's chemistry we fairly enough accept rather than Black's, because vastly more facts and researches have been added to what was known by the former, to set aside many of his results, valuable as they were then. But is that true as to the question of the origin of language between such scholars and thinkers as Plato, Eusebius, Bochart, Gale, Locke, Berkeley, Beattie, Magee, etc., on the one side, and the later German philologists, with Professors Max Müller and Whitney on the other? I think not. The *chief* grounds of a decision of this question may have been as well known, or better (at least better considered) by the former. The conclusions of the latter may be their rash deduction from supposed new facts, while the old and greater grounds for the judgment are overlooked. And such I am persuaded is the fact.

The data upon which to build a right judgment in this matter are (1) history; (2) analogous present facts (processes of human thought and learning); and (3) an analytical study



of actual languages, either 'dead' and existing only in ancient writings, or still written and spoken. The new opinion excludes the first of these, makes a partial use of the second, and depends mainly upon the third. This last, indeed, as almost all based upon the study of Sanscrit, is entirely modern—the work of the last half-century. That is some excuse for an exaggerated and all but exclusive devotion to it on the part of its special students, and for all who 'love the latest thing out' in what is read and talked about, as well as in fine clothes. But is it an excuse for us, as we faithfully seek truth, if we neglect the other though older elements of this inquiry?

On the contrary, the reasonable presumption is altogether in favour of a different method, viz., first, to examine whether we have any historical statements or implications which may give us facts as to the origin of language? if so, what grounds of respect and confidence we have in the authorship or other incidents of this history? what is of the personal knowledge of the author? what given as (or otherwise evidently) traditional, and its probable value as such? Then, secondly, to adjust this as well as we may to such present analogies as we can observe. And lastly (or, the others utterly failing us, simply) to resort with caution to such suggestions as we can draw from words and forms of speech in the most ancient languages, and their subsequent changes.

Upon carefully examining anew the modern method in question, as it is given by Prof. Max Müller and my countryman, Prof. Whitney, I find that they *begin* with the last and weakest evidence, do not even pursue that carefully, inasmuch as they pass by the study of the very language which is by far the oldest according to any trustworthy history, and begin with, not even the Sanscrit, but some conjectural and hypothetical language older yet, they say. Around this they arrange whatever they find to their purpose in certain other languages. By this method, having formed a theory of the beginning of all language, they proceed to argue out of some partial analogies, as of the infant and growing intelligence of each human soul, and the history of other arts and faculties of men, to support this. But of history, in this very matter of the beginning of language, they have

not one word to say. They make no account and take no notice of it whatever.

Prof. Whitney (*Study of Language*, p. 251) calls his statement of the ingenious conjectures of Sanscrit study 'our historical analysis,' etc. Whether this is a rightful application of the adjective will be examined later. But surely something of the kind, which is 'historical' or semi- or quasi-historical, is not actual history, a truthful narrative of events, or even a statement as to such events, transmitted by any oral tradition.

And yet by all fair self-evidence this should be the first step of such research. Here are all mankind using, as a matter of course, a power which separates them from the brutes, and includes all their other best knowledge. Have we any record or tradition, any suggestion or trace of how or when it began?

I suppose that they would meet this now by saying that we have no such history (probably adding that, in the nature of the case, we *could* not; but I take no notice of that now, as a being mere begging of the whole question); therefore they waste no time upon the thought. But why are they so sure of this? Those older thinkers whom I have mentioned at least thought they had such historical ground. Why are they not examined and refuted, if so much mistaken? Prof. Whitney seems to me entirely unacquainted with those writings, and does not allude to them in any way, apparently assuming that any such notion is a mere prejudice of mistaken religious bigotry, dimly floating in some honest but very narrow minds. Prof. Müller does notice them, but merely in the way of caricature and sarcasm, as if somebody had long ago so utterly refuted them that they had been 'exploded' (not indeed *burst up*, as some people do evidently fancy the phrase to mean,—that is, that obsolete errors are like air-balloons or soap-bubbles, suddenly collapsing, or even 'casemates' of prejudice which have been blown up by the projectiles of 'modern thought'), but hissed off the stage of common sense by common consent of all reading people. I rather infer from this that he himself may never have read them attentively. Be that as it may, we will now hear the other side of the question.

There is one part of the historical material which so far exceeds the rest in value that it is as well to confine ourselves to it; that is the Holy Scripture. It is not indeed alone. The venerable traditions of all the ancient nations have something of the same which may be worth more for wise conjecture than all our eager deductions from mere disconnected words. One thing is certain, that nothing really historical gives us any account whatever, or most dim tradition, of men's emerging from a wordless state into the other. Whoever will fairly consider this, and the more he does so, will see that it alone should be a strong check upon the positiveness of such theorists. On the other hand, Socrates (in the *Cratylus* of Plato, p. 269), says, 'The first names were framed by the gods; . . . the imposition of names, etc., belonged to a nature superior to man;' and the writer of Ecclesiasticus (xvii. 5), 'The Lord created man, . . . in the sixth place, understanding . . . and in the seventh, *speech*,' etc. (see also Eusebius, *Prep. Evang.* l. iii. chap. vi.) are fairly the representatives of a traditionary thought, which is deserving of respect and study now, even if they did live more than two thousand years nearer to the events than our Professors. But all this is the very least of our historic material. The Book of Genesis, in its first three chapters, is such real history, very distinct, detailed, and definite.

The answer given to this, with more or less impatience, would be that we must treat it scientifically, and not mingle religious belief with the investigation of Nature. But I reply that we must examine it *truthfully*; and if scientific method will not allow of that, so much the worse for the scientific method; but we who love truth will persist in the truthful method. This antithesis is, however, most displeasing to such objectors. They say that 'science' is equivalent to truth; that to be 'scientific' implies being truth-loving and truth-seeking. But if it 'rigorously excludes' what we believe as Christians, from the truth as so used and sought, then it says positively that what we know by Christian faith is not true, and that it is a necessary condition of the pursuit of truth to allow this. But surely to one who does believe these things upon the faith of God's Word, that is essentially false and blasphemous, tending directly to the missing instead

of the achieving of what is true. 'Would you then try a question of astronomy by the words of Holy Scripture?' That has nothing to do with the matter now before us, as to whether it is the way to find the truth upon this question of religious history, viz., when religion began, and what was its first thought and action, by discarding the Divine history in Genesis. I either believe that this is a true history, or I do not. If I do, and as I do, it is utterly senseless in me to discard it in an inquiry into the very matters of which it directly treats. It would be just as senseless if some one else were to insist upon my so doing because *he* did not accept this as true history. May I not search for myself? Cannot a Newtonian mathematician pursue his calculations because some belated Ptolemaic does not believe what the former knows to have been demonstrated long ago? At another time I may try to reason him out of his perversity, but now I am in pursuit of truth for its sake and for my own sake. Thus our present inquiry is *as* Christians, and not a polemic with those who deny what we fully believe.

You may ask me if it is not yet entirely within the limits of that Christian belief to doubt whether these words of the Genesis as to the speech of the first man, of God to him, etc., are so literally true as to bear upon the present question. I answer, first, that if I were to allow that doubt, it would still remain true that this non-historical sense (if you can tell me what it is) must self-evidently have some bearing upon the earliest exercise of speech by man, and therefore could not be neglected by us in the present inquiry. A Christian who takes the history in such a non-literal sense should be prompt to ascertain that sense, and to apply it with the mighty force it must have to the question before us. If he tells me that he has no assured conception of it—certainly none definite enough to help him now,—I can only say that I do not see how he can rationally proceed with the inquiry from the inferior data until he has acquired some such fair and clear conception of the superior. And I suggest whether his want of any definite sense of this part of Holy Scripture is not quite an indication that a more simple and literal sense is the true one. I remind him that such has been the undoubting conclusion of a long line of devout and truth-loving men in

all ages of the Church, and that there are such men still. More definitely, I refer him to these words of Archbishop Magee, a strong thinker, a most devout and diligent student of the Book, a very learned scholar, and a most careful reasoner: 'That which Scripture so obviously and unequivocally asserts, namely, the Divine institution of language' (*On Atonement and Sacrifice*, i. 376).

The writers to whom I have alluded may say for themselves that I may pursue this my religious or Christian method if I choose, but they are engaged in a purely scientific study of language, without reference to religion; and one of the conditions of that is the rigorous exclusion of religious dogma, etc. Now, with my Christian reader and me, here is a question directly *of* religion—of primitive religion. In this, as such, for us the Word of God in Genesis requires to be rigorously *included*. I have fairly shown from this (and from reason) that the use of language, as given to man directly by His Creator, is one of the essentials of this primitive religion. But here comes the supposed 'purely scientific' result, that this is not true. I cannot believe both of these results. I must decide that one or the other of them is false, and which. I so decide of the 'scientific.' Then, of course, I judge its supposed process of proof to be erroneous, and I do truth and all my fellow-men a service in showing where it is at fault. This is very valuable, for one thing, as illustrating a great fact, much overlooked now—that it is often quite *impossible to separate questions of 'science' from those of religion.*

It seems always to pass for very wise to dismiss all the controversies of this kind in which physics, geology, biology, etc., are involved, by saying that 'all difficulty would be avoided if neither science nor theology would invade the sphere of the other,' and the like. Let this go for what it is worth in those matters (and no more, for it deserves even there as 'rigorous' a scrutiny as anything else). But what must be its application where the matter of inquiry like this lies in the very domain of Scripture authority (if there be any such thing)? Is it a question of 'Nature'? Yes; of human nature. And has our religion nothing to do with that? Is it of how man began his life? And had his Creator nothing to

do with that? Is it of 'the beginning' of his thought and speech and religion? And has the *Genesis* nothing to do with that? It is plain by this very instance that if, in order to be scientific, we must exclude the use of God's Word Written from this investigation, then 'science' has no rights in this investigation. I do believe that in another generation it will seem astonishing that any sort of Christian scholars ever neglected these most curious and interesting chapters of history in any research of the kind. They would be such even if we thought them no more divine than Herodotus. But I suppose none of whom I speak would say that. The Oxford Professor will not admit himself an anti-Christian, and the Yale Professor would think himself wronged not to be named a Christian. They mean to follow the truth everywhere, and by all means. Why, then, should they refuse this assistance, this really indispensable part of the material at their hand, for use in some way, because some one says that for him the Mosaic history is 'unscientific'?

Let me suggest what is the path which has perhaps conducted to this false position, and then they and their numerous readers who have followed them in it may see the deviation and retrace their way. Having hastily and confidently (and so inadvertently) neglected the historical research at first, and then upon the very insufficient ground of verbal resemblances, etc., formed a theory of the human invention of language, when they are in any way reminded of an older and different belief drawn from the historical investigation, they assume that their work has itself demonstrated that the other cannot be true. So that, if they decline to utterly discredit the history in the *Genesis*, they are sure that its literal and obvious meaning is not the true one. One thing is plain, that Prof. Whitney did not begin his inquiry as to the origin of language with any sort of study of this Divine history. Nor even when he has determined his own theory (demonstrated a truth, he would say), does he then compare it with that history. He gives a mere glance at the belief which so many great men have drawn from that, only to say coldly (and yet rather impatiently) that 'language is a Divine gift only in the same

sense in which man's nature is a Divine creation ; it is human in that it is brought about through that nature by human instrumentality.'<sup>1</sup>

He says that 'our historical analysis brings us to the recognition of elements, which we must regard as, if not the first actual utterances of men, at least the germs out of which their later speech has been developed.' Now I have followed attentively what he calls this 'historical analysis.' In this I have read a great deal of ingenious and interesting talk about certain words in our language and their probable connection with older languages. This seemed fairly to imply a certain progression and enlargement of those languages as there were new conditions of social life and accumulations of knowledge. I found also some conjectures as to how men, if they had had no words to begin with, might have gone on for a long succession of generations advancing toward that use. But I have not at all been brought by this to accept these conjectures as true in fact, much less to see how they could be true, and a certain history of how the first of our race were talking with God or were having any sort of religion could also be true. Nor can I see any allegorical sense of that history which would suggest his theory, or in any way agree with it. Therefore, as I do believe the history, I do not believe his theory.

This notion of men slowly inventing language is indeed not a new one. It has been considered and argued for ages by the most acute of men. But it is also a fact worth considering that in general they took sides either way, as they were religious or irreligious in opinion. Thus we have Socrates on one side, and Lucretius the Epicurean atheist on the other, and in the last generation Dr. Johnson on the one, and Condillac the French 'freethinker' on the other. And in the great struggle of strong minds of the past over this question, the critical point was precisely as to how a being like man, with no instruction as to speech, would ever make the first step in that direction. They indeed who thought most deeply saw most plainly that in this emphatically

<sup>1</sup> Rather an obscure and clumsy sentence. In what sense, pray, was the first 'man's nature a Divine creation,' so that 'He brought it about by human instrumentality'?

'*C'est le premier pas qui coûte*' (It is the first step that costs). That once passed, the rest was comparatively easy of explanation. For example, once grant a highly intelligent, social, and thoughtful being, such a being might struggle with all ingenuity to contrive and then to improve some method of expression and communication with other such beings. But how can we conceive of a man *as* intelligent, and social, and thoughtful, if he has no language and never had? Or how would he continue such for a year, or a lifetime, to say nothing of the many generations supposed before any real language is evolved? The substance of the best thought about this is well expressed by the great Dr. Johnson—that remarkable combination of reverent faith and profound common-sense—as to man's power of speech, 'which I think he would no more find out without inspiration than cows or hogs would think of such a faculty.' Can Prof. Whitney have ever given any thought to this aspect of the question, which induced even Hobbes to say, though well acquainted with the other notion, that 'the first author of speech was God Himself, that instructed Adam how to name such creatures as He presented to his sight'? (*Leviathan*, chap. iv. p. 12.)

Thus Prof. Whitney assumes that the passage of the speechless man, to where the first 'scanty roots' of his Indo-Germanic are found—the other side of that vast chasm,—is the easiest thing in the world. He even gives us as it were a mathematical demonstration, thus: 'Nineteen-twentieths of the speech we speak is demonstrably our own work; why should the remaining twentieth be thought otherwise?' (*Study*, etc., 398.) This would be something as if a solitary castaway on some little island in the South Seas, being found by a chance vessel with a crop of twenty bushels of maize, which he had secured during the year since he alone survived shipwreck there, and the question being asked where his seed-corn came from, it should be replied that, as nineteen-twentieths of it was demonstrably his own work, why should the remaining twentieth be thought otherwise.

Another great gap in this argument is its necessary assumption that man has been going on in a constant improvement from his beginning, so that if we trace him back



a certain distance, *e.g.* by the changes of his language (even granting this to be a certain gauge of his condition for that period, and that we make no mistakes in our process), and the process comes to an end short of the actual beginning of man, we are sure that if we could continue it we should find his thought and language growing less and less until we came to *zero* at that very point of beginning. Whereas there is an alternative which must be taken into account, and removed out of the way by reason or proof, or it will make the conclusion in question doubtful, or even utterly overthrow it. This is the belief, as held for ages, and still, by many of the most intelligent of men, that man is a being who in that very period back of the 'historical analysis' of words in question, was *degraded* from his 'first estate,' intellectually as well as morally. This, I say, must be either allowed and taken into account in the conjectural inferences as to his first language, or disproved and disallowed. Neither of these has Prof. Whitney or any of his side even attempted to do.

But far the most serious thing in regard to this is that this early degradation of man is not merely one of the possibilities of the past, which must be disposed of to leave the ground clear for a true conclusion: it is a positive *truth*, of which God Himself has informed us, and to which all true History responds. To say that this means only moral degradation does not take it out of the question before us. For this in itself must have an immediate effect upon a large class of *words*. But still more, it is not only rational to suppose that a moral (or rather spiritual) degradation would affect badly all man's intellectual state, and his use of speech, but the highest source of knowledge we can possibly have informs us plainly that it did so in fact, as, *e.g.* Rom. i. 21, 22, 'They became perverse in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,' etc. To trace the present speech of men some distance back, and then, taking no note of this earlier degradation, to infer from that alone their primitive language, is altogether misleading. This brings us naturally to examine what use Prof. Whitney makes of present analogies. One such of considerable value, if rightly used, is that of the

acquisition of speech now by the child. He says (p. 442) : ' Learning to speak is the first step in each child's education. . . . So it was also with the human race.' The comparison of ' the human race ' and its ' education ' to the little child's is a favourite one with some writers. But it does not help us to find actual truth, unless some proof is given that the processes are like. As a mere figure of speech or piece of ' fine writing,' it is more likely to divert us from our object in matters like this. If of use now, it must be as to *individual man* at the beginning of language. I have already shown (p. 133, etc.) how absurd is the assumption, so common now, that the first man was in fact an infant,<sup>1</sup> either in body or mind. But to pursue the illustration as given, how does each child learn to speak? By inventing ' scanty root-words,' or by any of the slow and laborious processes by which we are told that the ' Aryan ' languages, etc., were built up? Certainly not. He learns words directly from those who already have them in possession and use, and who acquired them from others before them in the same way. The whole process is one of hearing, memory, and application in use. Then, if the comparison is good for anything, thus was the first man taught (by the only One Who could teach him) words, which he in turn was to communicate to his children as they were born, and so on with all the following generations. Thus, after all, this very analogy, rightly used, brings us back to the conclusion that mankind did not slowly invent language, but received it direct from God.

But are there any other present or historic facts in regard to speech which suggest the reverse? Do its advocates, or can they, produce any instance where men have actually begun without a language, and elaborated it, so that it was ' demonstrably their own work ' or anything like this? None whatever. On the contrary, all the facts we have of those who have been born deaf and dumb, of young children left to grow up wild and alone, or of others of our race entirely without language, point the other way, to the same conclusion, that no instincts of human nature, social or intellectual, can bridge the chasm between the speechless and the

<sup>1</sup> *Infans*. What a suggestion in the very etymology!—*non-speaking*.

speaking until some words can be actually taught. (See further as to speechless men, Diod. Sic. I. iii. 19, p. 187, tom. i. ; Wessel, Lord Monbodo, Kaspar Hauser, etc. ; and examine again what Whitney says of such cases.)

There is another analogical fact which may be of use to us. The many actual languages do not differ only in using different words or grammatical constructions, but also in the very sounds and articulations, so that some of these are found in one language which are not in another, with manifold variations of the kind. Now it is a well-known fact that some of these sounds cannot be uttered perfectly by some if by any adult persons in whose mother tongue they do not occur. The vocal organs are (or seem to be, which is the same in effect) incapable of the action necessary, this even with the most persevering effort, and with most careful instruction and example of those who have used these articulations with the ease of nature ever since they can remember, to whom it seems strange that there should be any such difficulty. How this might come to be in the migrations, etc., by which lingual changes are brought about in the course of ages, is quite conceivable. But that grown men and women should ever come to practise these sounds with one another, which they had never even heard, is not conceivable. The slow process of the child's learning by imitation the mother tongue which he hears continually around him, and is taught every day by his elders as well as by his own necessities, has no resemblance to this.

Condillac seems to have observed and admitted this difficulty in saying (as quoted by Magee, i. 372) that 'the organ of speech, for want of early use, would be so inflexible that it could not articulate any other than a few simple sounds ; and the obstacles which prevented them from pronouncing others would prevent them from suspecting that the voice was susceptible of any further variation.' He tries to escape from this by an assertion that the pliant muscles of the children will invent words which the parents will apply to thoughts. But a moment's consideration that it needs all the maturity of thought possible, as a previous condition of seeking the utterance, will answer that.

Yet Prof. Whitney is 'sure' that if two human beings were

thrown together without any previous language, their social necessities would compel them to begin it. But his being 'sure' of it does not at all alter the fact that they never would. Many people are just as 'sure' of things which he and I know they are mistaken about. *Why* is he sure? That is the real question. Is he reasonable in this, when not a single *fact* of the kind can be shown, and all facts point in the opposite direction? He might as well insist that two persons born dumb would speak to one another in a like case, because their social nature required it. He says indeed elsewhere: 'And *why* do we speak? what is the final cause of the gift of language to man? . . . The general answer . . . is this: that it enables men to be, as they were intended to be, social,' etc. Here is a positive statement of what we 'were intended to be,' and which is the 'final cause' for our receiving a 'gift.' If true, it is by all agreement an important truth which belongs to the present question, and is not to be excluded from it by any necessity, 'scientific' or otherwise. Yet it is my fellow-man's statement, which is entitled to just so much authority as that implies, and no more. But who was the 'intender' of all this, and the giver of the 'gift'? I would rather know about it from Him than from my fellow-man.

And I have it upon this higher authority; it is neither his nor my opinion, but I *know* from God Who made us that men were intended, above all and including all else, to be *religious*. This is the 'final cause' of God's 'gift' of language to them; and as man needed it at once for this, so I am sure at once it was given. And does not this also make it more and more plain that the other reasoning is fatally defective, in making no account of the Divine history of the first man? It has to resort at last to this account of the purpose of language, that 'it enables men to be what they were intended to be.' Yet when this comes to be stated, then that very love and worship of God, which is in truth first and all-including, is all *excluded*!

Finally, as to the imaginary case in which Prof. Whitney is safely 'sure' that what he says would occur, let us remember that his 'two persons' would be the progeny of one or two hundred generations in unbroken succession of speech-

using mankind. What effect of heredity this might have in making speech easy and 'natural' to them—though I see every reason not to expect the result he is 'sure' of—is one thing. What the first of our race—without any hereditary tendencies whatever—could do, is quite another. Is not this of Dr. Blair (*Rhetoric*, i. 71) much wiser in the way of such conjectural reasoning?—

'One would think that in order to any language fixing and extending itself, men must have been previously gathered together in considerable numbers; society must have been already far advanced; and yet, on the other hand, there seems to have been an absolute necessity for speech previous to the formation of society. For by what bond could any multitude of men be kept together, or be made to join in the prosecution of any common interest, until once, by the intervention of speech, they could communicate their wants and intentions to each other? So that either, how society could form itself previously to language, or how words could rise into a language previously to society, seem to be points attended with equal difficulty. And when we consider, . . . difficulties increase so much upon us on all hands, that there seems to be no small reason for referring the first origin of all language to Divine teaching or inspiration.'

I find the same unreflecting<sup>1</sup> positiveness of asserting what we have now seen to be so inconceivable in Chambers's *Encyclopædia*, article 'Philology.' Let us see what title this writer has to dismiss so contemptuously all the best thought of the past ages, especially the careful conclusions of almost all the great Christian writers (he calls them 'some theologians).'<sup>1</sup> In the outset he says: 'In opposition to the philosophers who attributed the origin of language to human invention, some theologians claimed a Divine origin

<sup>1</sup> For if not this, it would have to be characterised as a few men's insolently dictating their false opinions to all others. It should also be understood by the many who go to such books, not for the assertion of partisans, but expecting to find the best results of wise research and thought as accepted by all intelligent people now, that Chambers's *Encyclopædia*—which I mention specially because actually furnishing to many persons all their information about such matters—while valuable as a book of reference for many facts, is full of the many mistakes of those modern writers who have discarded the wisdom of God's Word, and only think of it when an opportunity seems to occur to disparage it.

for it, representing the Deity as having created the names of things, and directly taught them to Adam. Both these theories may now be considered as given up by all who are entitled to speak on the subject. Everything, in fact, tends to show that language is a spontaneous product of human nature—a necessary result of man's physical and mental constitution (including his social instincts), as natural to him as to walk, eat, or sleep, and as independent of his will as his stature or the colour of his hair.'

Now, though I am, by venturing to differ from this, relegated to those 'who are *not* entitled to speak on the subject,' I will proceed without any such title to test the truth of these assertions. And first, after looking carefully and patiently into all that has been said on both sides, it is plain to me that 'everything, in fact, tends to show that language is NOT' any such 'spontaneous product of human nature.' Does the dumb man, does the infant child, did Kaspar Hauser or Laura Bridgman—do these, even with their hundred generations of inherited practice in speech, tend to show this 'spontaneous product' and 'necessary result' of man's 'physical . . . constitution'? Does one single fact or trace of a fact support it?

But this is not all which the writer has to say. After dismissing in this way the whole matter of the origin of language as of no real consequence, he goes on to discuss, as the only thing really worth attention, some of its changes afterwards. Yet with a sort of unconscious consciousness that there is a fatal void in his science at that point, he comes back at last to that great question, thus: 'The positive part of the science of language having pushed inquiry back until it arrives at monosyllabic roots that admit of no further analysis, there stops, as at the legitimate boundary of its province. It assumes the existence of a certain store of crude or primary matter, and merely concerns itself with how out of this matter the structure, as we know it, has been built or has grown up. But a question yet remains, which, although it can never receive but a conjectural answer, has a wonderful fascination for the speculative mind, and was, in fact, the question with which all inquiries into language began—the question, namely, How did language take a beginning

at all? how came this primitive material of language, these significant roots, into existence?’

Now if all this is outside the ‘legitimate boundary’ of his science, why did this writer begin it with such a positive assertion about that very matter of the origin of language as we noted before? If the question ‘can never receive but a conjectural answer,’ why did he so absolutely (and contemptuously of certain other answers) affirm what the only true answer could be? The affected moderation in this second statement, its vagueness in form (and real unmeaningness in effect), does not make it any the less in fact of evident intention as positive as the former. Thus: ‘The answer may be thus conceived: To speak is a necessity of man’s rational and emotional nature; he speaks because he thinks and feels,’ etc. Of course this means the same as the other statement, of speech being ‘a necessary result of man’s constitution,’ ‘as natural to him as to walk or to sleep.’ Yet on the very next page we read: ‘Another speculative question regards the length of time that language must have taken to advance from the rudimentary stage to the state in which it is found in the earliest records. Bunsen assigns 20,000 years as the lowest limit,’ etc. What! a ‘spontaneous product of human nature,’ which requires at least 20,000 years to reach a stage far below that of any of the negro languages now! A ‘necessary result of man’s physical and mental constitution (or “a necessity of man’s rational and emotional nature”), including his social instincts,’ which may not have grown to what we find now in the lowest savage after mounting through a thousand generations! What do these men mean by ‘spontaneous’? what by ‘necessities of our nature’? Suppose our ‘eating or sleeping’ had had such a history.

It is we only who in any just sense can speak of language being at first ‘as independent of men’s will as their stature or the colour of their hair’ (not, indeed, its subsequent changes). For if it all began with the ‘workings’ (‘conscious’ or unconscious) ‘of his intellectual nature,’ it most self-evidently was not ‘as independent of his will as his stature,’ which most certainly did not ‘grow out of’ these workings of his ‘intellectual nature.’ Yet all this inconsistency of state-

ment and contradiction of facts must be accepted for truth, in order that we may believe that it took the soul of man two or three times as long (by the most ample chronology within the limits of sober judgment) as it is now since the days of Adam to get those 'few scanty roots'—a language (if it can be called such), even then, according to them, without a word for *God*, or *Spirit*, or *anything religious*. Indeed this is all an amazing specimen of the credulous looseness of thought in which these men indulge who are too rational and truth-loving to believe in the Divine history of Adam. They think that our forefathers, after a thousand generations of slow improvement, were only just emerging out of that speechless, unreasoning, and unspiritual existence. What then, must they imagine of the first man? Yet as a part of this sagacious and consistent 'conjecture,' we have this: 'It seems reasonable to assume, as it has been well put by Steinthal, that "at the origin of humanity the soul and the body were in such mutual dependence that all the emotions of the soul had their echo in the body, principally in the organs of respiration and the voice. This sympathy of soul and body, still found in the infant and the savage, was intimate and fruitful in the primitive man: each intuition woke in him an accent or a sound."''

Anything more fanciful and 'assuming,' in contradiction of all suggestion of facts, it would be hard to find anywhere. None of the 'theologians,' even the most imaginative, could surpass it in their way. If it could have any remote trace of probable truth in it, that would be an attempt to represent what we do know for fact, that God gave speech to 'primitive man' at once with his life, as a part of his nature, and an immediate necessity of that life.<sup>1</sup>

To recur now to that inexhaustible treasury of suggestion—God's creating man 'in His Own image,'—it is not conceivable that this should be meant to represent a being who had merely the faintest rudiments, if even that, of anything spiritual—no capacity of knowing and loving God, but whose progeny, after a vast succession of slow-advancing

<sup>1</sup> Otherwise it ascribes to him a spiritual sensitiveness far above ours, yet supposes the whole race to have sunk into brute stupidity as soon as speech was achieved.



generations, should *begin* to approach that state. If we had this said only of mankind, as we know them now in general, it would be a painful wonder of contradiction, as it were, of what we see all around us. What! this unhappy and distracted being, with some noble thoughts and many conscientiously mean and unworthy ones, with such vast and countless varieties of character and condition and fate,—here one who seems in comparison admirable and felicitous (the very one to have the deepest sense of being far below what he ought to be, and depending upon the mere mercy of his Creator to restore him to his true nature),—and there a dirty, stupid, sensual, unspiritual, and yet selfishly cruel savage, with all sorts of intermediate varieties, the vastly greater proportion being of the more miserable and bad. If this were all we knew of man; and then we read, ‘And God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.’ It is because we do have this story of the innocence and dignity of Paradise, and even more the glorious Gospel of the Last Adam, our restoration, and new creation, that we can so firmly believe those wonderful words of the beginning. But try to imagine at all the beginning of man according to this new doctrine. I will not state it as its own necessity does force those who, after once accepting its process of thought, proceed to think further in the same way, going back through every preceding stage of animal and vegetable life to the formless ‘protoplasm;’ so that they cannot stop at any intermediate point and say: ‘Here *man* begins.’ But suppose the beginning, as related in the Book of Genesis, to be with a creature of our present anatomy and physiology, but with no spiritual thought and no language, that to be ‘evolved’ through many successive generations. Can we conceive of this being the Divine account of such a beginning—‘And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and let him have dominion,’ etc.? In what imaginable sense can we think of an animal, which as yet has no speech even with one of his own kind, to express love or to exchange thought—no actual thought or sentiment as yet above the ape (or the really nobler dog, as now taught by man), only a possibility of this after what must, by all admission, be a very slow process of development—as being ‘in the likeness of God’? Dare any

one think of God Himself as being such an 'evolution' from the inferior and rudimentary? As the very essence of thought about Him is of the *perfect*, is not the lowest sense conceivable of that which He now makes 'in His Own image,' that it is now complete in its kind? Let us then conceive of our ideal man by all that we now know; and that is rationally what we must think appeared when God spoke those great words of His creation. Now is this ideal that of the tall biped, without any more words or thoughts—especially those most exalted ones of a spiritual religion of love—than the other animals had? or is this true idea the exact opposite, and to which even the best of the present men is far inferior, instead of what the other theory really requires—that the basest of the present mankind are a great improvement upon that beginning? It may be that the emphatic and repeated saying of the Creator after His work, that 'it was good,' nay, after man was made, that 'it was very good:' and His 'resting,' as from what was complete, was a great prophetic contradiction of any future false science which should say that this was only the faint beginning of a long 'evolution.'

This truth of a primitive language with which God at once endowed the creature whom He had made in His Own image does not at all involve the question whether that language survives now, or even any considerable or recognisable fragments of it. That is a fair question of the later history. As it was apparently a mistake of some former learned writers to identify it with the Hebrew, so it is a still greater error of some present ones to confound these questions. There is surely nothing proved and nothing gained to truth by ridiculing and caricaturing those who assumed that the Hebrew, just as we have it in the Old Testament, was the original language of all mankind, and sought to show that all other languages were directly derived from it; or those who also sought to prove that all that was true of history or religion in other writings must have been got from that Book of God. Allow the arguments to be quite inconclusive—many of them evident mistakes—and their results untenable, it is still quite another question whether the Hebrew is not far the most ancient tongue which we can really trace in writing, and whether the best traditions and beliefs of all other races

were not originally derived from the same sources with what we find in those Scriptures.

Thus such scholars as Selden, Bochart, and Gale were plainly mistaken in treating the Word of God to mankind before the Gospel as simply identical with, and nothing else than, the holy *writings* of Moses and the prophets. This was really assuming that no man or people could have received from the Divine Father any command or other revelation of truth until Moses wrote, an inadvertent absurdity (for what, by their own belief as to Adam, Enoch, Noah, or Abraham, etc.), which could not but mislead them, and more or less vitiate the results of their work. Yet refute their arguments from this false premise as clearly as you may, and you do not at all prove that the Hebrew language is not the most ancient of all, nor even that it is not the primitive one. It might be all that, though the thoughts which passed from it by oral tradition through the first ages into other races and tongues were earlier than any of its extant writings.

Yet Prof. Max Müller is never weary of referring to this theory as such a ridiculous error, that of itself it shows beyond question to any one of common sense that none of the researches of those scholars are now of any value; that the Sanscrit is the only ancient language of much account; and that all the speech of man was built up in India from his imaginary 'proto-Aryan' language, beginning with those whose descendants after a vast succession of generations 'first began to get the idea of "I AM"—those earlier men (shall we call them?) being separated from us, it may be, by hundreds of thousands of years.'<sup>1</sup>

Is it not a pity that one so intelligent and ingenious, and who knows so well how to express himself in clear and pleasing English, should fancy all this the simple pursuit of truth? or, what is far more unfortunate, that he should use this talent and influence to undermine that wise faith in the Word of God, which is surely worth far more to our race (and to him, and to each one of us) than 'to know whether the ancient Aryans before their separation knew the mouse,' etc. etc.?

In regard to the age of the Hebrew Scriptures, there is

<sup>1</sup> See *What can India teach us?*

altogether sufficient proof, even to any candid person who did not admit their Divine inspiration, that the writings of Moses are at least ten generations older than the most ancient remains of Sanscrit. Indeed, those who claim that much antiquity for the latter cannot bring anything like the evidence for it which exists of the other. The only competitors in this way which the law of Moses could have, would be the Assyrian and Egyptian remains lately discovered. And for these it is rather in appearance than in reality. For their age is all a matter of conjecture, however ingenious, after a total blank of three thousand years or more; whereas the other has been in actual keeping and contemporary reading from each generation to its successor ever since. They are but disconnected fragments, the value of which to history is not yet determined; and, strange to say, evidently to all, very much depends upon their being connected with the Book of Moses. *It* is history itself, of the most precious kind, and linked to succeeding and never interrupted history. Even all this is the least of its immeasurable superiority to all such competition for us who know that God Himself is more its author than Moses.

It is thus quite probable, though perhaps not quite demonstrably certain, that some of its *words* are of those which God gave directly to the first man. For, granting that in the two or three thousand years between this and when we find these words used by those who spoke the Hebrew language as great changes of speech had occurred as since, it is more likely that even though that primitive language would have been, *in the main*, as unintelligible to Adam as the Teutonic of two thousand years ago would be to us now, some cardinal words, such as the names of 'God' and 'man,' etc. (see *ante*, p. 139), would have survived among those to whom the greatest purity of religion had come down by tradition, than that they would have utterly perished from memory and use.

And besides this, as the Maker of all and the Master of all history had Himself given such words for the greatest purpose of man's existence, and then afterwards had provided to have His Book of this history and of the highest truth written for the use of man, it is most reasonable to

suppose that He would have preserved for it these remains of that 'beginning.' I can myself hardly conceive the contrary of this, *e.g.* as to the word *Adam*, when I read in the perfect truth, 'And God said, Let us make *Adam*,' etc.; for that is the very word used in the original.<sup>1</sup> However, the relation of our words to the absolute true may contain mysteries which we should not assume at all to measure in that way. But, on the other hand, the study of any such most ancient, interesting, and in their very employment here sacred words, cannot but be of use to us, for one thing, as some counterbalance to the presumptuous mistakes made in the opposite direction, in assuming that everything in language is man's most slow and clumsy device.

Much has been theorised and written by students of Hebrew about the word *Adam*, and what will now be said of this will apply in a corresponding way to many other of the Hebrew words. Every genuine trace of ancient tradition deserves careful notice. But the Rabbinical writings so-called are in general worthy of far less attention as furnishing these than is often accorded to them by Christian scholars. As for anything historical in them, they are all separated from what they profess to record by such a vast gulf of ages and revolutions; and what is more, their stories have upon them such a plain stamp of puerile invention, that what can be reasonably thought to have any trace of fact is very little in the midst of a great mass of fictions and speculations.

The first thought may be that the Jews now must be the great authority for the Hebrew, as the English are for that language. But a little consideration qualifies this very much. The critics of the Lower Empire are of very little account as to the classic Greek and Latin; yet they were much nearer to those times than the Talmudists, etc., to the Hebrew Scriptures. Then, too, those were still their living languages, while the Jews for more than two thousand years have been Syrians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, Spaniards, Portuguese, Germans, Poles, and English—but not

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 26. Perhaps even more conclusive a little later in the record (Gen. v. 2), 'Male and female created He them, and blessed them, and *called their name Adam*, in the day when they were created.'

Hebrews—as to their mother tongue and common language. The use of Hebrew in their synagogue service does not take away the force of this. We have a parallel case all around us. Does the use of a Latin liturgy make all its adherents Latin scholars? Does it prevent a very great part of its ministers being utterly ignorant of the classic literature of that tongue, even of its construction—only just able to read aloud their service words with a sing-song iteration? The same precisely is true of most of the Jews of our day. The very training for their ‘ministry’ which young boys undergo, as it has been described to me by some who have gone through it, is enough to cramp for life all useful thinking about the words. Some few learned scholars in this they have. But as for the comments upon Scripture, and remarks upon particular words contained in all their literature, the credulous and superstitious fictions with which all these are mingled only illustrate the more of how little value it is for understanding those originals.

But even all this is far from being the strongest reason why we should not make much of their sayings in any of these matters. We know from the very highest authority that they of all men least understand those ancient ‘oracles of God,’ which were first committed to their ancestors to preserve and understand them, but were taken away from those who rejected the Messiah, Who was the fulfilment of it all. And to all who succeeded the men of that generation in that rejection we must ascribe the same ‘blindness,’ that, ‘seeing they do not see, and perceiving they do not understand’ the Law and the Prophets, as Our Lord declared of them.<sup>1</sup>

I am aware that a contrary notion is now generally allowed by Christian writers, and fancied to be a part of the wise fairness of our age, that the Jews are the true guardians and interpreters of the Old Testament, as the Christians are of the New. But I believe this will no more bear a sober

<sup>1</sup> Of great force with us to the same effect should be what Our Lord said of the Rabbinical learning even of His day, (this before that rejection of Him in which the ‘branches’ were finally ‘broken off because of unbelief,’ Rom. xi. 20)—‘making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition,’ etc. (St. Mark vii. 13).

Christian scrutiny than will the modern sentimentalism which in novels, poems, newspapers, and *sermons* makes of that unhappy people a sort of 'consummate flower' and illumination of the human race. Besides its contradiction of fact and of true religion, nothing, I believe, could be worse for them. It flatters the vanity of race, which is one of their great misfortunes, and encourages them in the same cunning and unscrupulous love of gain and of power by means of it, upon which they have concentrated almost all their energy and industry now for some 2000 years.

It has been taken up by some who are in deep earnest to bring this people to faith in Our Lord—a noble work, in which may God prosper them and give us all a heart to do what we can to help. But this cannot be helped—will only be hindered—by our departing from any of that truth as we have received it; and a part of that truth it surely is that those who 'would not have this man'—the Messiah—'to reign over them,'<sup>1</sup> as the Lord and Saviour of all the people of God in the world, by that choice ceased to belong to 'the Israel of God,' and fell further away from it, as then completely set up for all mankind, than those who had not had the privileges of their race. How any one can question this as a Christian, I cannot understand. Is it because St. Paul speaks so lovingly and generously of his kinsmen after the flesh? because he says that 'blindness *in part* has happened unto Israel,' and afterwards, 'and so all Israel shall be saved'? etc. I confess that I never read this passage without a profound sense of a great mystery, which no one now can interpret, which perhaps must be its own interpreter in future history. It may well kindle our hearts with loving zeal to bring the unbelieving Jews to the Lord and Saviour of all. But that is no reason why we should forget what we are so plainly told in God's Word, or confound with that truth any ambitious sentimentalism or philosophy which really contradicts it. Let us consider that we do not know how much of St. Paul's prophecy then was limited to that very age, to that 'day of salvation' for the Jews ('for He limiteth a certain day'), during which Saul the Persecutor himself became Paul the Apostle—a

<sup>1</sup> 'We have no king but Cæsar' (St. John xix. 15).

day perhaps lasting until the destruction of Jerusalem,—after which the Divine recognition of them as a people ceased. A considerable portion of them then belonged to the one true people of God. The rest, as a separate race, all adopted for themselves the terrible cry at Jerusalem—‘His blood be upon us and upon our children’ (St. Matt. xviii. 25).

Let us remember also that it was some years after writing the words cited before that St. Paul came to that very city of Rome to which they were written; and then, having a conference with the Jews living there, it concluded with his saying to them: ‘Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people,<sup>1</sup> and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it’ (Acts xxviii. 25-28).

After this we have not a word addressed to them or said of them in the New Testament, *as Jews*, so far as I can find. What silence as to them in the great Epistle to the *Hebrews*, in which only Hebrew *believers in our Lord* are so much as alluded to; in that of St. James, in every sense an Israelite indeed, and probably ‘a dweller at Jerusalem’ from the Pentecost until his death; most profound and impressive in those of St. John and in the Revelation. To avoid confusion of thought, we must confine the term ‘Jew’ to its present general sense—that is, to those of the race of Israel who in that generation finally rejected the Divine ‘Hope of Israel,’<sup>2</sup> and their descendants who have followed them in it; while we designate as Israelites all of that race while they were still heirs of the promise, and those of them who have at any time become penitent believers in that great mercy of God, and been happy to lose the distinction of

<sup>1</sup> Emphatically the Jewish race as such—‘*the people*’ (not ‘a nation’); *λαός*, not *ἔθνος*. See p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xiv. 8.



*race* in becoming, with those of 'every kindred and tongue,' a part of the glorious 'household of God' in His Son Our Lord. (See also Eph. iii. 11-22.) The former term is, indeed, sometimes used in the latter part of the Old Testament, and in the New, for all who professed the religion of Israel. But in the actual language of our day the Jew is *not* a Christian; and the distinction proposed will be very useful.

For the first three Christian centuries we know of them only—what no one seems now to have the courage to say—as the most bitter and bloody persecutors of the patient Christian Martyrs. I challenge any one to find, from Nero to Julian, one instance of Christian persecution of Jews, while these, though themselves fellow-subjects of the Pagans, are incessant in hatred and cruelty toward the holy and harmless 'true people of God.' Afterwards, in the dark days of the Church, there was a terrible reaction of cruelty toward them. Then in modern times we have another reaction yet—not to Christian pity, like St. Paul's, but to one form of the worldly indifference and unbelief which prevails. Thus Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*—the main thought of which is that a good Jew is a little wiser and better than a good Christian—is generally credited with beginning that literary fashion, which continues to this day, and has its latest exhibition in the novel of *Daniel Deronda*. History and Politics, Art, Science, and Mammon-worship have each its phase of the same. One tries to outdo another in demonstrating (what none of them really believe) that the Christian nations are all a dull set as to Arts, Sciences, Poetry, Music, Politics, and what not, but for the incomparable genius of this or that Jew.

But perhaps the most mischievous of all is that critical and philosophic fashion of 'damnable iteration,' that we owe so much to 'Jewish thought.' What is 'Jewish thought'? For anything of long existence among, and characteristic of, that people, it is substantially the Talmud. What do we owe to that? For anything actual in 'Jewish thought' now, it is the boasting of their Rabbis and writers, that 'Judaism' has been the enlightening and elevating principle of all mankind. Is that so?

But it may be said that this means that we Christians owe our very religion to 'Jewish thought.' This may be said with some consistency by those who dislike and despise—or, without any sort of sentiment, reject—that religion; but it cannot be said with truth by any one. As for the Christian who adopts the phrase (and the thought?), does he really believe that the knowledge of the One God, 'the Father Almighty, Maker of all things and Judge of all men,' of the eternal life, and of the supreme laws of love to God and man—in effect, of all that is fairly contained in these—that this knowledge is the product of 'Jewish thought'? Even to lay aside, in part, the just distinction before made, and take the ancient Israel and all the Old Testament within the scope of what is Jewish, do we owe the knowledge of true religion as found in them to the people who are living among us as Jews? Did Moses himself or the prophets invent or elaborate this, as one of these Jews now does his finest productions, of whatever kind? They themselves never say such a thing. They incessantly proclaim the opposite. That whole religion, as such—that whole Book—is full of penitent humility toward God, receiving the truth direct from Him. In the entire Old Testament, from beginning to end, there is not a particle of the 'Jewish thought' of our day, or of twenty centuries past. It is of altogether a different range and quality. We might apply to the superhuman simplicity of heavenly truth stamped upon it all, what the great Christian Israelite said of the Gospel—its completion and yet far higher revelation of God to us,—'Where is boasting, then? It is excluded' (Rom. iii. 27).

Do we even owe our receiving the Old Testament to the Jews? Not at all. It is they who, as anti-Christian, have no right to it. The true Israel kept these 'oracles of God' for that great Kingdom of God, which was to entirely terminate and absorb it. When that 'fulness of time' (Gal. iv. 4) came, all that was great and sacred of 'thought' within it passed to that Divine society, which, beginning with those true sons of Abraham, who had his faith, and gathering like souls out of all the world, shall have no end. To insist upon calling this 'Jewish thought' is therefore simply one form of denying the Gospel. Of course those who choose to do that

can do it, in this or any other form they choose. But we to whom it is the most certain and the supreme truth can have no part in that.

More exactly still, those primary religious truths which are generally allowed in Christendom are, as we have already seen, neither a 'natural religion,' which is the slow invention of all men's thoughts, nor a gift to the rest of us out of 'Jewish thought,' but a part of that primitive religion which God gave to man from the first. Nor is it at all suitable to call this by the latter phrase, as having been revived and communicated to the rest of mankind by that people. The history of all this we shall see in its place. But nothing is more contrary to fact than to assume that the Jews, as such, were ever the converters of the rest of mankind from false religion. Is it they who have effected the change of the last nineteen centuries? Or even, going back of the Advent of our Lord, that people in general (as to be distinguished from the prophets of His Kingdom), according to that Divine description of some of them, 'trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others,' and left them to their false religion. Who was it that organised this work, and gave His orders to His servants (and has urged and animated and prospered them in it ever since), 'Go ye *into all the world*, and proclaim the good news to *every creature*'?

Does 'Jewish thought' actually now, or has it in all these ages of the glory of those words, ever included them within itself? Does it have any part in the ceaseless homage and love which rise to that Great Converter of mankind? Or, for another view of this, will any one say that '*He was a Jew* in fact, and so named even now by some of His most ardent admirers,' and therefore His sayings and doings are rightly included in the phrase in question? I answer that none of His people ever thoughtfully speak of Him in that blunt way, or without such qualifications as would remove all that concerns Him from such associations as that phrase implies. All they think of Him shrinks from such an implication.

Nothing can be more untrue. The Jew is the anti-Christian descendant of Jacob (or Esau).<sup>1</sup> Is there any

<sup>1</sup> It is strange that some notice has not been taken of the *fact* that after the conquest of Edom, and *incorporation* of its people with the Jews under the Mac-

actual 'Jewish thought' which at all resembles Him as we know Him in the Gospels? What a wonderful difference in the whole spirit—as it were, in the very air—which the Lord breathes! Some 'Jewish thought' is around Him—in the scribes and priests, the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is, in fact, one of the elements of the Divine simplicity and incomparable superiority of this Son of David to all others of our kind, that there is absolutely nothing of the Jew in any of His words or acts.

Another mistake which has crept into Hebrew study in our day is that of making so much of kindred Arabic words. It is very true that the Hebrew and Arabic are cognate 'Semitic' tongues, have many words and constructions in common,—in effect are hardly more, at least in certain forms, than dialects of one actual language. I do not know enough of Arabic either to deny or affirm that, as is often said, it contains a vast and varied literature, and, as such, has a richness and variety of forms far surpassing the Hebrew. Admitting this all, it does not begin to prove, what is now commonly assumed, that the Arabic is the original Semitic tongue from which the Hebrew words got their primary meaning. The exact reverse of this is far more likely. For that same Hebrew literature which we are trying to interpret, all of it, was complete, and had become old and locked up in a dead language before the Arabic literature began. The modern Italian holds somewhat the relation to Latin which the Arabic of those writings does to Hebrew—in some respects rather as daughter to mother than as of two long-separated sisters. But what would we think of the common sense of one who should insist upon interpreting with certainty all the Latin classics as to the primary meanings and constructions of words by the diction of Alfieri and Manzoni, or even of Macchiavelli and Tasso? It would hardly be taken seriously, or, if so, as the all but insane conceit of some ill-balanced though ingenious mind. It would be said, 'These men wrote in another language 1500 or 2000 years after Livy and Virgil, under another order of things, and after great revolutions of life and ideas.' Precisely the same thing

cabees, the Jews of later times are largely descendants of Esau, and no one can tell where the mixture has not gone.

is true as to the Arabic writings from the Koran down to Ibn Batuta or Ibn Khaldun, as compared with the Old Testament. The earliest Arabic literature (or even alphabet) is a thousand years after the latest Hebrew, and about 2000 years after Moses.

If it be said that the Oriental peoples and languages have a traditional stability which removes them from the comparison, then, with all reasonable allowance for this, the gulf between the two is too wide to be lightly bridged in that way. And we know that Arabic writing is, on the contrary, much further apart from Hebrew, as to any continuity, than Latin and Italian; has been subjected to the greatest forces of political and religious revolution—of commerce, war, trade; of the mixture of foreign populations—Greek, Egyptian, Persian, Turkish, Moorish, etc.

The only justification for this kind of subjection of Hebrew to Arabic is that we have no other comparison of language to help us out with the difficulties of the former. But this is no reason whatever for such bold positiveness of insisting upon altogether new meanings of those most venerable and august writings which were given complete to mankind, by inspiration of God, many generations before the first word of this Arabic literature was written down. We have never been in need of any such desperate guesswork for the main and practical meaning of it all. We have always found this plain sense upon its face, and witnessed to also, by the true witness and keeper of it, as well as of the Gospel—the understanding of the whole Church from age to age. Along with this we have also had for more than 2000 years a remarkable translation of it into Greek, to some parts of which, at least, the Supreme Word of God gave His sanction in person. We have also other such versions, both ancient and modern, to fix and transmit this original meaning; among which stands the admirable one in our own language, of which I am sure that each one who fairly compares it with the Divine original, whatever little defects here and there he may think he finds, sees more and more cause for thanks to the Lord of the Church and of all that our people have had such an English Bible now for nearly four hundred years.

The original language of the Old Testament is therefore in a position *sui generis* as to its interpretation. It has not only ceased to be a living language for two or three thousand years, but those who, by descent of blood, might be otherwise supposed the best preservers of its sense, are—as God our Saviour, Whose Book it is, plainly tells us—perversely blind to its true spirit and meaning, and therefore most unsuitable guides in that study. And with this agrees what any one can fairly see for himself, as to the great folly of very much which they say in interpretation. If it should at first seem to any one that this had nothing to do with the derivation, primary meaning, or grammatical construction of particular words, he would be quite in the wrong as to the interpretation of any writings whatsoever ; as the whole sense of a passage will often turn upon just such particulars, and then any wrong bias of opinion might pervert them. But this is especially true of the Book which, according to the celebrated saying of Mr. Locke, ‘has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter’ (*E.* 201). And yet, with this constant precaution, he may avail himself of such useful suggestions as he finds in the Talmudist or later Jewish writings, and in the parallel Arabic diction. What the Assyrian or Chaldee remains—or still more the Phœnician, upon further exploration and study—can furnish, may be much more useful yet.

What is wanting in these others is far more than made up to us by the wonderful quality of self-interpretation which belongs to the Book itself. Thus he who, receiving the substantial meaning of it in the Church, the *sensus receptus* of all the ages, diligently studies it alone, by comparison of its parts and of the uses of the words of these different parts, will get a fairly correct knowledge of the whole language, an increasing reverence for the whole Book, and confidence in it all as the Word of God. He will not penetrate all its mysteries ; for none ever can by this or any other means. But he will escape from such a foolish confidence in his own wisdom as would otherwise rob him of a wise confidence in the wisdom of God’s Word.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PRIMITIVE WORDS OF RELIGION—HEBREW AND ITS COGNATE LANGUAGES.

THE Talmudic writings have a great deal to say of the name 'Adam' and of the man himself. Their so-called traditions about this are such preposterously silly fables that it seems strange some Christian writers will repeat them,<sup>1</sup>—in an apologetic way, to be sure, yet as though they were of some value in history. These traditions show, indeed, that there was never a question among the Jews of this man by name having actually lived. What the Talmudists say of 'Adam' meaning 'red,' and why the first man was so named, is of little value. The same is true of what is conjectured about this by modern critics from Arabic uses. Taking the natural method of examining the word and its cognates in all the Old Testament (using any other helps also for what they are really worth), and in any such adjective uses, it evidently means 'ruddy,'—that is, with the high colour of healthful beauty, which is now seen in the races of finest mould, both physical and spiritual. There is thus no need whatever of that painful inference drawn by some, that this only perfect man had the complexion, any more than any other characteristics, of our savages. The history also plainly tells us, as before noticed, that this was his proper name, while another name, *ish* (*ishak* for woman), meant man in general. 'Adam' itself became afterwards one of the common nouns for man. But this seems very natural. It was by speaking of men as his descendants that it easily grew into a custom to call a man a 'son of Adam' (even now in English the expression is not uncommon), and then briefly an 'Adam.' The earlier phrase survives literally in

<sup>1</sup> For example, Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*.

both the singular and plural forms in the poetical diction of the Hebrew to the last, as *ben-* or *bni-Adam*, translated always 'son,' or 'sons of man.' What a suggestion of dignity in the former, that its corresponding phrase in the New Testament was to be one of the titles of 'the last Adam'! Sometimes such nouns of descent are a sort of adjectives, formed from the name of the ancestor, as '*Israelite*, a descendant of Israel.' But it is really more according to the method of Hebrew to use the noun without change for its corresponding adjective, as thus, '*Adam*, an Adamite, or descendant of Adam.' This of itself might have made our scholars more cautious in following the affectation of the Talmudists in distinguishing the meanings of the two words *ish* and *adam*, that the former denotes a man of rank, the other a man of mean position. Thus our English translators, according to this notion, have so rendered these terms when found together in five places: Ps. xlix. 2, lxii. 9; Isa. ii. 9, v. 15, xxxi. 8. I do not venture to reject something, which has been accepted by all our lexicographers, each from his predecessor (inadvertently, I suppose), without very careful examination. But as the result of such an examination, I have no doubt whatever of the mistake. The first trace of it is in these Rabbinical interpreters, long after the Christian era. Even the Vulgate, in its present form, after centuries of influence that way, does not consistently follow that interpretation.

For even in the instance first cited it renders both these words *homo*—'*adam*' being used three times and '*ish*' twice. And the English Psalter in the same Psalm uses 'man' simply for each of them in verses 7, 12, and 20, while in verse 16 '*ish*' is rendered even *more* indefinitely 'one.' Indeed, if in verse 2 any such distinction is intended, it is the reverse of the one in question. And so the English Psalter honestly gives it thus: 'High (*bni-adam*, sons of *Adam*) and low' (*bni-ish*, sons of *ish*). Yet in the A.V. they shrunk from this contradiction of the accepted notion, and actually reversed the order of the words thus, 'low and high,' and thus fell into the absurdity of destroying the evident parallelism of 'rich and poor.' So in Psalm lxii. 9 the Vulgate translates both *bni-adam* and *bni-ish* as *filii hominum*.



The passages in Isaiah are rendered by *homo* and *vir* respectively. And this suggests how the false rendering in question began at the late period mentioned above. The Jewish scholars, finding in the literary languages of that time (both Greek and Latin, though in the former it seems to have been of later introduction) such a distinction of the words *ἄνθρωπος*, *ἄνθρωπος*, *vir*, *homo*), it occurred to them to assume this as the distinction of these two Hebrew words. And the derivation of *homo* from *humus*, 'ground,' corresponding to that of *Adam* and *adamah*, that was taken as the designation of inferior man. This, too, was accepted from them by later Christian scholars, to whom the classic languages were even more the standard of all grammar.

But a very careful study of all the uses of these words from Moses to Malachi, not a single one being passed over, or not *studied* in its relation to this question, entirely overthrows that notion with me. The general result is, that these words are used convertibly and interchangeably. Sometimes the word '*ish*' does appear in designations of honour; but, on the other hand, sometimes it is '*adam*' in such uses. And sometimes '*ish*' is used in denoting baseness of any kind. What, for instance, can be made for the notion in question by any sort of twisting of '*ish-ha-Belial*,' 'this man of Belial,' used of Nabal the 'fool,' or as used by Shimei reviling David in his flight before Absalom—'thou *ish-ha-Belial*,' 'thou *ish-dammim*' ('man of blood'), and the historian himself describing the rebel Sheba as an '*ish-ha-Belial*'?

Often and often the two words are used in the same passages as of exactly the same force, which I could show by the citation of nearly 2000 instances, scattered through all the ages and authors of the Old Testament. For example, take King Solomon—surely one of the most lettered and thoughtful of them all,—and with rather a royal bias toward distinctions between nobles and princes and common people. (The Holy Book is, indeed, alone among all ancient writings for its simple, spiritual superiority to all such distinctions among us creatures before God, whatever may have been the personal tendencies of any of its writers the other way.) In that part of it of which he is the human author, there are

some two hundred words for 'man,' nearly equally divided between these two. Throughout these the equivalence and interchangeability of the two is plain—the place of honour, if any, being rather given to *adam*, as in that very thoughtful and profound Book of Ecclesiastes, where for instance (ii. 12, 18) he surely would not have spoken of his own son and royal heir as low-born. The real difference of the words, for doubtless no synonyms are entirely such, at least originally, I should suppose, from a careful comparison of all the uses, to be what is indeed strongly suggested by this first employment of them in the history of the Creation. *Adam*, being the proper name of the first man, and ancestor of all the others, the word came easily enough by the process already described to be used for the whole race, and each person of it, whether male or female, high or low. '*Ish*,' as the common noun, designates the *individual* generally; and if a man is to be described by his employment or character, the noun for that is added to this. Thus we have '*ish-milhamah*,' 'a man of war or battle;' '*ish-Elohim*,' 'a man of God;' '*ish-ha-Belial*,' 'a man of Belial;' '*ish-dammim*,' 'a man of blood.' *Adam* is never used in this way. This is indeed suggested by the probable affinity of *ish* to the verb '*ish*,' 'is.' What exactly agrees with it also is that the one word for woman and wife, whatever her degree—even if a slave—is '*ishah*.' Is not this of itself almost, if not quite, conclusive of the whole question?

But there is another like fact in the language of equal force. There are two other words in Hebrew for *man*, used quite a number of times, though neither of them nearly as much as either of these. The one is '*enosh*,' whose primary meaning is undoubtedly and by all agreement *sick* or *weak*, liable to disease or death. The other is '*geber*,'—that is, *strong*; as one of the old lexicographers says, 'Quasi Lat. *vir*, a viribus dictus.' Now '*ish*,' lacking a plural of its own (there are only three instances of '*ishim*'), and taking it from one of these last mentioned, according to the supposed difference in meaning, which must that be? Certainly *geber*. Thus *ish*, 'a man;' *geborei*, 'men.' But the fact is just the reverse: it is *ish*, 'a man,' *anashim* (the plural of *enosh*, 'feeble'), 'men.' Is it not a wonder that this alone, so plain, has not

long ago shown the mistake? Then also *ish* is very early (Exod. xxv. 20, etc.), and not by some late figure of speech, used of individual *things*, thus showing plainly that its primary thought is of mere individuality, and not of honour.

And as to this very point of the more ancient and primary meaning, the remarkable saying of Balaam: 'God is not a *man*, that He should lie; or the *son of man*, that He should repent' (Numb. xxiii. 19) is most worthy of notice. This prophet represents, not merely the Hebrew of the Israelites in Moses' day, but the common speech of these people of the East, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean. What he says is therefore a very curious and precious relic for the study of early language. [I am well aware that those who can see nothing which does not favour their theories may say that this is merely the diction of the historian recording a fact (even if they will admit it to be such) in his own language, and, as some of them will boldly insist, many ages after the supposed occurrence. Nevertheless, it is worthy of study in this connection by all those who are simply in search of truth.] Both the words in question are used in the original, thus: 'God is not *ish* (a man), that He should lie; . . . or the *son of Adam*, that He should repent,' etc. Can any sort of consistency be shown between this use of the words and the notion in question?

As for the passages first noted (Ps. xlix. 2, lxii. 9; Isa. ii. 9, v. 15, xxxi. 8), we have only to read the original in the light of what we have now seen, and it all appears a natural poetical amplification; as if they were thus rendered: 'Both man and mortal, both rich and poor;' 'Surely mortals are vanity, and the sons of Adam are a lie,' etc. 'The *man* boweth down; the mortal humbleth himself,' etc. Indeed, the very last of the passages (Isa. xxxi. 8), carefully studied, would bring out its really powerful sense much more clearly by this change: 'Then shall Assyria fall by the sword, not of a mortal; and the sword, not of a *man*, shall devour it: but it shall *flee from* the sword,' etc. The Prophet declares that God will overthrow that terrible nation, but not by the sword of human war, as wicked Judah was ambitious to accomplish this by alliance with heathen Egypt, but by inward terrors of soul. The

translation, as we now have it, is an *anti-climax*, an absurd repetition in weaker form, 'not of a mighty man, not of a mean man.'

If a devout reader, whether a Hebrew scholar or one to whom the English Bible is his only resource, merely follows the rendering in question, he may silence his disappointment, and with ingenious zeal try to frame one or another account of what this transition from the 'mighty man' to the 'mean man' can mean here. But if he had been carried along by the mighty poetry and piety of the Prophet in all this rebuke of the impious ambition and presumption of his own people (beginning with the thirtieth chapter, 'Woe to the rebellious people,' etc.), and his abhorrence of the alliance of the Egyptians, yet with a vision of the High and Holy One overthrowing the common terrible enemy, he could not but be perplexed when he came to this sentence. He would naturally say to himself, 'If the sword of the mighty man will not avail, and must not be trusted in, what need to repeat this as to help from a mean man? If that terrible power of battle which certainly will destroy Assyria is not the "mighty man's," whether Egyptian or Jew, why should the Prophet fear that I might yet give the honour to "a mean man" instead of to my God?' The moment, however, that this is seen to be simply an amplifying repetition of the same thought, all is natural and powerful as before.<sup>1</sup>

This correction was due to simple truth, in so great a matter as the right rendering of some of the most important words in the Book of God. But it has,<sup>5</sup> besides this, an important bearing upon our view of these great events at 'the beginning.' It removes what would be a puzzle of the history, if so glorious a personal name as that of the only one of us all who was once perfect, as made in the very 'image of God,' should have come to be a term of contempt. (Very contrary would this have been also to all the thought and usage of patriarchal times). It ought to be well weighed as one of the marks of superior antiquity in the Hebrew, that it almost alone (in the other Eastern languages not near so plainly) preserves the personal name which

<sup>1</sup> Only here, at last, the 'Revision' seems to catch a glimpse of this error, and attempt to correct it, but only with a false plural of אָדָם.

God gave to man at his creation. This may seem ridiculous to some, but it must be quite otherwise to Christians. We all accept this as the Divine Genesis; and even no theory of an 'allegory' here requires us to doubt the genuineness of the name *Adam*.

We may return, then, to the use of these two words in the primitive language, unhampered by the artificial notion which has here been disproved, and which indeed could be convicted of absurdity by this first use of them. Imagine Adam, alone upon the earth, calling himself '*ish*,' as not one of the common people, and this to the disparagement of his own proper name! Or if this be explained as a later change, then the *proper* name was chosen in disparagement.

There was another and greater name in his language. There was a person, whom he knew personally, who was more to him (and so the knowledge of that other more to him) than himself. This paradox indeed could be true only of the One by Whom and for Whom he was made. But of Him it is certainly true, as any careful thought about this creation in the image and for the love of God would show us, and as we also know by His Word, that (according to that deep saying of 1 St. John iv. 7) 'Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,' and v. 20, 'This is the true God, and eternal life,' and as in his Gospel he repeats the very words of Our Lord (xvii. 3) as to those who by His redemption regain what was lost in Paradise, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.'

This had been already briefly noticed when the discussion of the 'beginning of language' necessarily intervened. But it needs now to be thoroughly considered. To all appearance nothing could be more plainly self-evident than that to love any one we must have some personal knowledge of him, and that only a *person* can be really loved. We have but to think of loving what we know cannot know of our love, or have any thought of it, what has no thinking existence, no memory or affection of its own to recognise or return ours, to feel that this is impossible. And so no one who does not believe that there is such a great and glorious Person ever speaks of loving Him, or

urges this upon others as their duty. (The transcendental and rhapsodical discourse of Spinoza is, in fact, no exception to this.)

It is true that some men now, who have a sort of profession or opinion that 'there is a God,' question whether He is 'a Person.' As to some such there is ground for doubt whether it is a genuine and serious question with them, and not merely a matter of puzzling others by argument, for their own entertainment or ambition. But granting the actual doubt to any now, it evidently did not trouble the two in Paradise. Not that they were persuaded out of it by a metaphysical argument; for instance, that first they believed *themselves* to be persons, by their consciousness of thinking, remembering, choosing, and the like; and therefore thought it not unreasonable that the Maker of all was such also, etc., but because at once, and as a matter of course, in knowing God they knew that He was a Person. That they were persons too, was rather the secondary thought, and an inferior reflection of the great idea of Him. I am persuaded that the dimness and confusion of metaphysics in all this arises from the blind reversing of the actual process of our thoughts. We do *not naturally* begin with thinking about ourselves, and of God afterwards, by musing over 'consciousness,' etc. But (and with the first two persons all thought was more wholesome and really natural) our thought in healthful nature goes out first toward others—and first of all toward Him Who is the First and the Last, by Whom all things, including ourselves, exist and consist. So evidently it was with the first human thought. It is this morbid bent of our present selfish condition which argues about these things in 'philosophy' in the reverse way. (This is also involved in the Divine saying that 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.')

It may be, though that is not so certain, that the metaphysical process is a needful medicine now for some bewildered souls, to help them back to a healthy faith. But even then it no more proves that every soul of us must be dosed with these toxological preparations (as, *e.g.*, Dr. Mozley's paper in *Faith and Free Thought* would seem to imply) than some men's need of strychnia proves that it

ought to be used by all. Still less does it impair at all the evidence of this simple truth of primitive religion, that man then knew God with entire faith and love.

As thus known to be Eternal and Almighty, He was indeed to them beyond all comprehension and reasoning ; but the truth was all the more reasonable for that. For if He were not all that, He would not be God at all. This first truth was that God was the incomparable and all-including glory and beauty ; that He was all purity and truth and love ; that He was their joy and life, their hope and love ; that to know anything which He wished became at once a great joy in doing it with love. So that a 'new commandment' was a new honour and delight.

For such a religion, language was as necessary as thought or memory. To say nothing of addressing Him with praise and prayer, they must 'speak often one to another' about Him. The very first words, then, would be His Names. (That there should be more than one such is according to the nature of all love, which finds pleasure in new terms of affection.)

Certainly to love a person, some name for that person seems indispensable. And surely two persons could not express to one another their common devotion to a third without any name for Him. Indeed it is quite inconceivable that God, giving a language to the first of our race, along with knowledge of Himself, and of their supreme duty to love Him, should not have made His Own blessed and beloved Name one of the first terms of that language. This alone would be in accord with that great principle of the true religion, which runs all through the Holy Scriptures, by which the '*Name* of the Lord thy God' is so great a thing for each soul of us. Without it, even in this simple history of Paradise, how could we have Eve saying, '*God* hath said,' etc. ? (iii. 3.)

These facts should suggest much to those who delight in the study of words, their changes and changed applications, as being full of the traces of history. For neglect of this some Christians now receive as truth in their reading what some say of all the Divine Names being only very late appropriations of words long first used for objects of sense. Of

course this cannot be true if, as already shown, man was to begin with a pure and true religion. When those confident, and, in some things, ingenious writers begin to tell us that the words long used for 'air,' or 'sky,' or 'fire' are at length taken to represent the idea, first dawning upon human intelligence, of something to be worshipped, I look for proof on their part that some Names of God have not been in use by men before that. But I never see any such proof or any attempt at it.

Yet why not? Why should I accept this (as it seems to me now) new and false notion, as soon as it is proposed to me, without something to remove my former firm conviction? The older belief not only commends itself to all my best thoughts, but rests, as I suppose, upon a ground of certain history. How can I at once substitute the other opinion without some reason given? Is it because a resemblance can be noticed between the earliest words for *air* and *sky* and *God*? or between those for *wind* and *spirit*? But for all that, why may I not as reasonably suppose the last-mentioned thoughts to be first in time, and that if we are sure (which indeed no one can be) that the one was transferred to the other, the process was not the exact reverse of what has been so much assumed? Take thus the term for *spirit* (in either of the most ancient languages), the invisible person that knows, thinks, remembers, and loves; that we find this word in use also for breath or wind is to me plainly the secondary or derived meaning, so applied because the breath, as invisible, represents the life, and the wind too, like spirit, is mighty though unseen.

The other could be true only if we were certain that the first generations of men had no religious knowledge or thought whatever. But we know that the exact reverse of this is true. Therefore we may be fairly sure that among the first words uttered or understood by Adam were those for 'spirit,' 'heaven,' 'love,' and the great Names 'El,' or 'Elohim,' and 'Jehovah.' That the former of these Holy Names, surviving also with its cognates in several other Oriental languages, has the adjective meaning of 'mighty' is a like transfer of thought (just as we have the English word 'godlike'), because God is the Mighty One. Of this we have



even a strong suggestion in the phrase in the later Hebrew by which a great object is sometimes described: 'a trembling of God' (A.V. 'a very great trembling'), 'a cedar of God' (A.V. 'a goodly cedar'), 1 Sam. xiv. 15; Ps. lxxx. 10. So also the great Name, commonly rendered in English 'Jehovah,' about the etymology of which much discussion and many different theories have been made, is best taken as primary, and the verb 'to be' as rather its derivative, He being the One absolute and self-existent Being. (After attentively considering the other and later conjectures as to the meaning of that most august word, I recur to this as the true one, as so revealed to us in Exod. iii. 13-15: 'I AM THAT I AM,' 'I AM hath sent me unto you,' etc. See the admirable note of Bishop Patrick on this passage.) It may be that even 'Baal' was at first one of the names of worship in true religion, and afterwards perverted to the false. Its uses in Chaldee, Phœnician, and Arabic accord with this suggestion, as well as its later Hebrew significations, first of *master*, and later of *husband*; for those lexicographers who reverse this order seem evidently mistaken. It is even used of the Holy One by one of the prophets (Nahum i. 2), where He is described as 'Baal-hemath,' 'a Lord of wrath' (A.V. 'is furious'). We may, I think, be sure that if the word had never been used in religion, except as to false and vile worship, its use as to the One, Only, and Most Holy God would have been avoided with abhorrence.

(But compare with this Professor M. Müller's remarks [*What can India teach us?*] about 'I AM' as being the invention of his 'proto-Aryans' through countless ages. 'What would other languages give for such a pure concept as "I AM"? No work of art has required greater effort than this little word I AM.' He seems to know so little of the Holy Writings of his own religion that he is entirely unaware that 'I AM' was said by the One God Himself to Moses, ages before the first word of Sanscrit was written; and then, as a long-used form of speech, which He now referred to a Name of Himself used in true religion for thousands of years before, and, in fact, given directly to man at first as a part of his primitive religion and language.

It is not strange, then, that we have this learned scholar

'walking on in the vain shadow' of his self-confidence, and exclaiming: 'This is what I call history in the true sense of the word;' and afterward telling us that when all this wonderful knowledge began to dawn upon him, 'all one's ideas of Adam and Eve, and the Paradise, and the tower of Babel, and Shem, Ham, and Japhet, etc., seemed to be whirling round and round, until at last one picked up the fragments, and tried to build a new world, and to live with a new historic consciousness.' Alas! that is so with many beside himself now. But let us rather turn from these vain imaginings to the old world which God built, and to His Word as the true and certain history of it.)

As to the alleged discovery by Astruc in the last century, —of the Genesis, and, in fact, all the Book of Moses, not to say the entire Old Testament, being made up of 'Elohistic' and 'Jehovistic' parts, to be entirely distinguished as to authorship, age, etc., by wise criticism,—this may be the most appropriate place to speak of it. After a careful scrutiny of what has been said to this effect, and reading all these Scriptures through with an eye to seeing what may be naturally observed of the kind, my own judgment is that almost all this so-called criticism is altogether artificial and far-fetched. In fact, these two great Names of God are used by almost all the Scripture writers, often in the same sentence; nor can any fair inference be drawn from them as to the time of any particular writing. The early parts of Genesis, in reading which Astruc is said to have fallen upon this discovery, may be from more than one hand. But if so, the only fair inference is that they are of even much greater antiquity than Moses. They may be surviving parts of the first word of God to Adam, passing down in exact verbal tradition through the patriarchs, each devout father carefully printing them upon the memory of his descendants. Such things have been even in later ages, and were more likely still in those days. They may have been even written down by those prophets of God (for we do *not* know that writing was not known by them long before what we know *positively* of it), and preserved by Abraham's family, until Moses should begin this sacred history by an inspiration which assured him of the perfect truth of that earlier history. There is

nothing in his words which contradicts this or suggests such contradiction.

This is far more rational than to fancy them parts of that 'wisdom of the Egyptians' in which he was learned. Let us leave the French physician to his, we may presume, well-deserved eminence in the specialty by which he is known to his own profession, and not follow him as a newer Moses in this fanciful exodus from that received historic sense of the Word of God, which its true 'Witness and Keeper' has held for now more than 3000 years.

Another part of Adam's knowledge was that God was the Creator of him and of all else. We may reasonably suppose that this revelation to him was in substance what we have in the first two chapters of Genesis. Professor Tyndall and others not infrequently speak of any such 'cosmogony' being an evident impertinence in a book of religion. Not so. If they looked deeper they would see that any religion which does not contain an account of 'the beginning' is essentially defective. It is a needful part of man's equipment for his 'duty toward God.' By a necessary instinct of this, or rather a clouded reminiscence of that first knowledge, all other ancient books of religion contain such 'cosmogonies.' The difference is that they are childish, and evidently false; that in this Genesis is sublime and most worthy of the faith of every man, though he may choose to despise it. That it is any annoyance to later science should be a suggestion by the same deeper thought of the defects of that science, and of the reverent caution with which it should at any time approach the confines of religion. And if this in the Book of Moses troubles any scientific men now, what must be the disgust of them all for the Vedas, the Zend, etc. Yet some of them show much more respect for the so-called 'Scriptures' of the Hindus and ancient Persians than for the true Word of God which their education as Christians puts in their hands.

Try and imagine the history in Genesis not to mean that this wonderful story of the Creation was given to the first man. Suppose it (according to the careless notion to which our age seems wholly given) to have been kept from human knowledge until Moses was inspired to write these words.

But why then, if never before? Why to only a hundredth part of the human race, to be locked up among one small people for 1500 years more, while forty or fifty generations of as many other nations should have come and gone on the earth before this began to be told to the rest (and has not yet after another as long period reached the greater part of them)? And what of the first man (and his descendants) for two or three thousand years? Was he indeed made to know God, and to love Him supremely—yet without any information (which was to be given to his remote descendants) of how he himself, and the world and stars around him, had come to be? *Could* he know God without knowing Him as the Creator? And if he was told that much, why not with all that information of what had just ushered him into being, which we now have in the Book? All this implies plainly that God gave this knowledge to Adam as a part of his religion. We do not get these thoughts at all from the poetic fancies of Milton, as some are so fond of scornfully telling us.<sup>1</sup> They are much older than he; simpler, but really much more beautiful, as the pure truth, which God was pleased to tell us all, without the sometimes glaring colours and artificial forms (to say nothing of the absurd heathen classic allusions) in which his splendid fancy dresses them, with its wonderful richness of sublime words in exquisite melody of verse.

That very poem of old Cædmon—the resemblance of which to the later *Paradise Lost* is so striking that we cannot help thinking it must have been read by Milton, as some suggest—is but one instance of the ancient common sense of both Israelite and Christian in understanding what we are taught in the Genesis of the condition of the first man, and his knowledge of the Creation.

This revelation to Adam is involved in the incident of the animals being brought to him to be named, as also of the other things which 'God said' to him (see Gen. i. 28-30, ii. 16, etc., iii. i. 5, etc.) And his understanding of

<sup>1</sup> Milton is not the inspired authority for religious doctrine, or for moral or political truth. He was a great poet, but certainly a man with the prejudices of his party and his age, and yet no little of the presumptuous self-confidence in his own opinions which characterises the worst side of our own times.

'Creation' we must suppose to have been that of all believers in this Book from the first, as that all else beside God owes its existence entirely to His Will. This has always been one of the clearest lines of distinction between the Divine doctrine of Creation and any heathen or infidel theory of 'emanation,' or of an equally *eternal* pre-existent *matter*, upon which the Divine power is only exerted in giving form. I can but regret that a Christian writer like Dr. J. H. Gladstone, and in the very act of defending the Christian faith against opposers (see 'Points,' etc., in *Faith and Free Thought*), should (at least seem to) give countenance to the latter notion, under the pressure of Mr. Darwin's theory of 'evolution.' Such is the effect of his criticism upon the meaning of the Hebrew word '*bara*' (created), in which he sets aside its well-established primary sense of 'to cause that to exist which had no being whatever before' ('out of nothing,' does not do justice to the idea; for it seems to imply that *nothing* is some sort of material used in the work). He gives for this the very insufficient reason that he 'has failed to discover any philological reason' for the ancient meaning.

What an overturning of all facts as to words would such a method conduct us to! That a word, after at least three or four thousand years of accepted use in a distinct primary sense, should be removed from that by some critic of another race and language, because he 'fails to discover any philological reason' for that meaning, is astonishing in itself. That this is the primary verb in God's Word about 'the beginning,' and witnessed to in this sense by all ages of God's Church, of which he himself is a member, increases the strangeness. Shall we reverse the sense of 'love,' or of any other primary word, because we 'fail to discover philological reasons' for the old meaning?

That in other passages secondary or figurative uses of the term appear does not touch that primary meaning. This is just as true of 'create' in English—though we all know that its primary sense in our language (even if that were the statement of an unreal and impossible thing) is to cause that to exist which had no existence before. Yet it will be sometimes said that one man is the 'creature' of

another, and the like. The true meaning of 'create' has no more to do with the idea that after the 'beginning' God retired from His power, and left all this to move of itself as an automatic machine, than the other. In truth, it is more contrary to it.<sup>1</sup> In a profound sense He is always creating all things as much as then; our idea of time past is only one of the limits and conditions of human thought, and does not apply to Him.

If Dr. Gladstone does not mean to imply favour to the notion of eternally existing matter, that surely should have been distinctly said. The other impression will be left upon the minds of every class of readers, whether inclined or otherwise to receive that notion. It seems quite out of the question to accept the theory of 'evolution' (not merely the fact that God does some things by processes of time—as we know He does with the successive generations of men, etc.,—but that of the 'universal law' so called, like that of 'gravitation,' that all variety of life and being is one continued and developing process, of which we can know neither beginning nor end), and believe that God alone is self-existent, and all else His will and work.

He does not find in any of the uses of *bara* 'any suggestion that the Divine action was exerted upon nothing.' One might think with a smile that this very statement answers itself. But perhaps he is a little confused by the not infrequent, though, as before observed, needless and really inaccurate statement of Creation as a 'making out of nothing.' No, surely; the Word of God contains no such absurd suggestion as that 'the Divine action is exerted upon nothing.' But we sometimes in the paucity of our speech, and because *we* can make anything only out of something already existing, may say this in our effort to describe that most transcendent wonder and verity, of God by His Will causing that to be which had no sort of being until then. That truth, indeed, alone accords with our best and deepest thought about these things, and is really the only alternative of atheism.

If our own 'philological reasons' are not quieted by all this proof of what *bara* actually means, the judgment of

<sup>1</sup> See '*The Reign of God*,' etc., by T. S. B., chap. xi. p. 180, and *passim*.

Gesenius most distinctly, for the old received meaning (and his bias was not at all 'theological,' but decidedly 'rationalistic'), might be wisely allowed to do so. History ought to go for something in such a question. And its voice is the same through all the ages. Take, for one instance of this, the sublime praise of the Eternal Lord by the hero, king, poet, and prophet in Ps. xxxi. : 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. . . . For He spake, and it was done,' etc. And for another, the words of St. Ambrose (*De Sac.* lib. iv. chap. 4) in comment upon this : 'Jussit Dominus et factum est coelum ; jussit Dominus et facta est terra. . . . Si ergo tanta vis est in sermone Domini et inceperunt *esse quae non erant*. . . . Coelum non erat ; . . . sed audi decretum David. Ipse dixit et facta sunt ; ipse mandavit et creata sunt.' So too Tertullian, the whole of whose book *Against Hermogenes* is to this effect ; Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, bk. ii. chap. 10. In fact, most of the Christian writers of the first five centuries have occasion to mention this doctrine of Creation as opposed to those of Pagans, philosophers, or heretics—of a pre-existent matter, out of which the world was *formed*. Greatest of all such instances, that article of the Nicene Creed, 'Maker of all things, visible and invisible,' which was always understood to declare that God alone was self-existent, and all else what He brought into existence by His sole Will and according to His sole 'good pleasure.'

And without this revelation to Adam we are utterly unable to account for the remarkable traces of it which are to be found in the remains of the Chaldees, Phœnicians, Persians, Egyptians—indeed, of the most widely scattered races of the earth,—even some of the North and South American tribes. (See Faber, *Origin of Pagan Idolatry*, i. 103, 104, 201-253 ; ii. 130-157.) Lenormant (*Origines de l'histoire*, etc., Paris, 1880, pp. 38, 42-47, 49, 58, 59, 62, 67, 71, 101-118, etc.) also gives a very interesting account of these, collected from Berosus, George Smith, Oppert, Brundeschi, the Zend, etc. These legends are very defective, and much disfigured and changed for the worse. But there is no mistaking their connection with the Divine story of Creation. They certainly were not taken from the Book of Moses (though some Christian scholars once could only draw that inference). Evidently,

then, they are fragments of the common tradition from the first man, who could know the same only by revelation from God.

What he knew and thought of all around him was thus a part of his religion. Evidently it was not precisely what men now think of 'Nature'—either the least or the most intelligent of them. But it does not follow, as a matter of course, that this thought was of an inferior kind, or may not have been much more true and great than that of even the latter class. True, he knew nothing of a 'Nature,' but only of the vast, glorious, and multitudinous creation around him, as 'the works of God.' 'Nature,' as all of our books and talk and thought are full of it now, is in fact—and, strange as it may seem at first—entirely artificial. It is an abstraction, for which the speech of man at first contained no term. Because he never observed the world outside of himself?—and it was only after ages of intellectual improvement that he began to do so. By no means. For, beside the impossibility of such inattention of men to what was all around them, not only do some of great name now tell us that men began their religion with 'Nature-worship,' but certainly the true worshippers of God were, as it is now often expressed, 'great observers of Nature.' Witness many of the Psalms of David, etc. Yet they say nothing of 'Nature,' and have no equivalent word for what we thus speak of continually. This idea, therefore, is a later invention of men, and therefore, as I have said, artificial.

The earlier conception, in its purest form, was of all this vast array of matter and life, this world, and the far-off sun, moon, and stars, as 'the works of God.' Afterwards it was more or less confounded with the Divine Power itself. Our later men of science in general treat this all as a lower stage of human intelligence, which they call the 'religious period.' But as regards all these ideas, we are too hasty if we apply their tests to the first man in his innocence. May we not now be at our best rather struggling upward to regain what was then lost intellectually as well as spiritually, than by so much in advance of the first man proportionally as to time as we are above the early Greeks? Indeed, may not our prevailing thought in this boasted escape from the 'religious



stage' be less true even than theirs—in this, that a mistaken application of power in 'Nature' to false gods is wiser than any view of it in which, while we wisely reject false religion, the true God is not seen at all, or, at least, very feebly and rarely?

And this is implied in the common speech, not only of the anti-Christians, but of us all in Christendom, about 'Nature' 'doing' this and that: 'choosing,' 'providing,' etc., being 'irresistibly powerful,' having 'laws, which cannot be disobeyed with impunity,' and which even 'reign' over us and all else.

Of all this Adam evidently had no idea whatever. To his healthful and powerful mind what we call 'Nature' was what God had made, and was perpetually doing around him, in a vast (and yet most complicated) order, which might employ him, and those after him for ages, in learning it with delight, and with increasing admiration and adoration of the Maker, and in accumulating this knowledge. We cannot reasonably conceive of his then thinking the world around him to have become what it was by a vast process of immeasurably slow degrees. For instance, when he afterwards observed the growth of trees, and recalled these words of the revelation, 'whose seed is in itself,' his thought would be that this related only to the continual reproduction of such plants, as the first grew old and decayed. If it meant that the very first plants began their life in that way of 'development' from the little seed, the formula would have been: 'the seed, whose tree is in itself.' Yet this is what is coming to be insisted upon as certain 'science,' to which the Divine words must be subjected, or rejected.

Is it a more rational thought for *us*, because some very ingenious persons of our day have traced out a multitude of instances, in which all indications point one way, namely that everything is moving slowly from the less perfect to the more complicated and complete? But is this even now a natural and true thought? Do we in beholding a great oak, with all its wealth of limbs and leaves, its broad bulk and shade, and a great corresponding part beneath the soil and out of sight, of which we also know—do we then at once of necessity think of this as developed from an acorn,—

perhaps the hundred millionth of it in bulk? Is not the more ready and rational thought that the acorn is a little part of what proceeds from the oak? Would Adam, after he had lived long enough to witness the process of growth from the seed to the full-grown tree, have thought of the first oak as having begun in that way? If this had been suggested to him, would he not have rejected it as reversing the real order? Is it not for *us*, when we insist upon this, a morbid process of thought, rather than a natural and healthful one? In regard to the vision of 'Nature,' compare Adam and the most admired naturalist of our day—say Mr. Charles Darwin. Suppose the former alone upon the earth, endowed not only with the knowledge and love of God in perfect innocence, but also with all the intellectual penetration, patience of investigation, and entire devotion to the pursuit of truth ascribed to the latter by his greatest admirers (and even fully accorded to him by me, so far as is compatible with my conviction as to his actual erroneous method of thought about these things, which necessarily arises from failing to see and love the glorious God above all in them all). Suppose also, for the sake of the illustration, that he was in possession of all the accumulated observations of facts by other men, with which Mr. Darwin started in his researches; and that to this first man, not as yet directly told anything of the Creation, had been presented in contrast, and for his choice, the two ideas—the one, that as this great oak had grown to maturity before his eyes from the little acorn, so the entire world, with all its variety, had 'evolved' by correspondingly vast lapses of time, from the simplest existence; the other, that the Creator, by His personal Will and word, had directly caused this vast complication to be, with its march of power and life, and its processes of incessant reproduction; the tree with 'its seed within itself'—not the seed with the tree within it; that precisely in this sense 'He spake, and it was done.' I think that in this case Adam would reject the former idea as false and unwholesome, coming from some suggestion of darkness and unhappiness, and accept the other as the simple and beautiful truth. I suppose that the clear, healthful intelligence of the knowledge and love of

God would so illuminate the whole matter that this would seem at once the true choice.

And in like manner, if Mr. Darwin had begun and pursued his studies, with all his own actual advantages, but also in the position of Adam, as to knowing and loving God perfectly, he would have seen and announced the same conclusion, and for the same reason. As it is, all such research and reasoning is carried on now upon no such firm ground of truth, but, as it were, while drifting upon a restless sea of imperfect knowledge, with an unseen current setting away from the truth as to God, the consequence of the universal loss of perfect love to Him. Unless this 'leeway' be allowed for in all our calculations of the results of our thinking, it will make these results untrustworthy.

One or two questions will assist us further in a fair judgment between these. Did these supposed achievements of truth, which set aside the older belief as to Creation, ever proceed, in the first instance, from those in whose minds this true thought and love of God was fixed as the primary and supreme truth? If the truth, it is to just such persons that we would be likely to owe its discovery. Is each one of its discoverers and first maintainers pre-eminently a religious person (not merely not an aggressively irreligious one, an express rejector of the Christian faith)—one who, in his 'passionate' (if we like that word) love of truth, is so far from blindness *or indifference* to the brightest and largest truth that any one of us can apprehend, that he steadily gives to it its supreme proportionate place?<sup>1</sup> If not, he is not—and no combination of other qualities can make him—a safe guide to others in such great matters as how we shall understand the very Word of God about Creation, or such suggestions about it as we might wisely gather from the facts around us. To follow such leading would be a plain instance of another great saying of the Light of the world: 'If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.'

Thus while all we really learn and know of these things now should promote in us an adoring love of God, as

<sup>1</sup> Every Christian acknowledges *this* to be a voice of supreme authority: 'Every one that is of the *truth* heareth *My* voice' (St. John xviii. 37).

before shown, we may be certain that the first of our kind were directly taught at their creation the two great commandments of love, as including all they ought to do. But we may either suppose this *all* that was told them of their duty—they to apply it to each occasion by their thoughts,—or we may suppose they also had some more particular instructions as to different duties. The latter is more according to our present experience and to all history from just after this. Yet we must be careful in applying that as the measure of the state of innocence, and not be too confident in any inferences from the comparison. To mankind, as they now are, many commands of God have been given, which (especially some that say, ‘Thou shalt *not*,’ etc.) could not have precisely applied to primitive innocence. Others would have had no meaning, then, for the two who were alone together in the world. Yet the subsequent Divine History, as we may understand it by the Gospel, is the only true guide as to this,—the suggestion and the limit of all our conjectures.

There was certainly one such specific commandment given to them, and, singularly enough, that is both one which merely forbids the doing a certain thing, and not one which, according to what we know of our nature, would by the best natural thought have appeared to be duty. That is, it is rather what some call a ‘positive’ command than a ‘natural’ duty. It would be but a reverent and judicious caution for us in all reasonings of the kind not to assume with positiveness that there is any less dignity, authority, or essential goodness in any given command of God than any other, because we cannot see in our nature and surroundings the occasion of this duty. From one true point of view we might with reason reverse this order, and suppose that what God commands, which we can fully understand, is *not* of so high dignity as that which altogether transcends our intelligence. We may suppose that the former might have been left to our observation and reasoning, while the latter was quite above these, and absolutely needed a revelation from God. But the wiser way is probably to make no distinction in what God commands. It is *His Will*, and that is enough for all our loving obedience. There is no higher reason for

right-doing ; nothing else can increase the goodness of the action.

For these plain reasons I altogether reject the frequent distinction made in Christian morals of some commands of God being merely 'positive,' and so of inferior force to others, which are 'natural.' Is it not certainly in contradiction of that notion that God gave one such so-called 'positive' commandment *first*, to be the very chief test of love for Him, and to determine by the action of these first two the spiritual condition and destiny afterwards, not only of themselves, but of all mankind as their descendants? For in any such distinction I suppose that without doubt we should so place this command: 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

The Church of God under the Gospel, and as illuminated by the Holy Ghost, has always held that the Ten Commandments given to Israel were a general publication of the duties of all men, and do not belong to that part of the law of Moses which was to pass away when Our Lord came. We may therefore most wisely look into them to find what God commanded the first of our race in their innocence, only leaving out from this what belongs evidently to the sinful condition, or not to their actual relations. Thus, as there was then no thought of 'other gods,' as there was no image-worship or other superstition, as there were no father nor mother to be honoured or children to honour them, as there was as yet no suggestion or apparent possibility of murder, adultery, or theft, of false witness, or even covetousness,—so we cannot suppose their duty given to them in the form of those Commandments. But we may well think that the obedience, spiritual worship, kindness, justice, purity, and truth, which are the soul, and so the main sense, of all those laws, as Our Lord Himself expressly pointed out, were in words enjoined upon them. That most of the Ten Commandments are in the *negative* form, forbidding acts which had not yet been done, would not of itself decide this—as though no such command could be given until there had been already some instance of the wrong act. The Sovereign Lord might anticipate this, if He so chose, in that

love and power which are His infinite wisdom, and forbid in advance what had not even yet been thought of. For so in fact He did (as we have noticed already, and will soon have occasion to consider more fully) in one matter, which became the crisis of human destiny.

There remains, indeed, the Fourth Commandment, which no theorist will suppose to have been 'evolved' from the thoughts of men about their relations. If this was not first given to men by God in words, it was not then given at all.

And this is exactly what some infer from the facts as they state them, that, as they would say—unlike any other of these ten great laws of God, which contain the duty of all human souls as such from the first, only republished with special circumstances at the great revelation before Mount Sinai,—this was one of those positive and temporary institutions of the people of Israel, and even less ancient by ten generations than that of circumcision.

Yet if, upon comparison of it by any with those other Commandments, it does not seem to them in its nature, like them, one of the universal laws of man, on the other hand, it has this point of superiority to almost all of them, in not being negative. It thus has not in it the slightest suggestion of not having been given until after men had begun to 'have other gods,' to murder, and the like. And it has this superiority to the only other positive one of these Commandments, that it did not need to wait for the development of other relations, as of parent and child, like the Fifth,—this, indeed, not as to the details of its observance given at Sinai, but the general principle of a holy seventh part of time.

If, as is by some argued, this is evidently only one of the particular and temporary institutions of the people of Israel, to separate them from other peoples until the Saviour of all mankind should come, because there is no mention of it in the Divine history until the Exodus, this is not of itself such proof. The same might be said of some of the others—certainly of the Third. No one can find the slightest allusion, until after the giving of the law at Sinai, to there being any sin of taking the Name of God in vain. Would we infer from this that it only began to be a sin then, and only as one of those

'ordinances' of that people, which were to be 'blotted out' by the Gospel?

Certainly not, it might be said, since that is one of the self-evident principles of true religion for all men, whereas the regarding one day more than another is an arbitrary designation. For no principle of piety and no 'dictate of conscience' would of itself suggest the distinguishing of every seventh day more than of every second or every tenth—or indeed of any one day more than another,—the perfection of piety being to consecrate all our days alike to God.

I have already suggested the danger and folly of our distinguishing between any commandments of God, according to our judgment of the reasonableness of them, or of their being founded in our nature, or the nature of things around us. If His words of command are plain, the supreme law of love then gives them the highest possible authority, whether we 'see a reason' for this or not. What greater possible reason can 'love with all the heart' toward such a Lord have for instant obedience? the great fact being always in our sight that we cannot 'know the mind' of this Lord—what greater reason than His command?

As to questions of 'casuistry'—for our duty in a given case of an apparent conflict of God's commandments,—these are rather matters of unprofitable speculation than anything actual. They are quite as likely to appear between two 'natural' duties as between any of them and the 'positive,' so called. The honest soul that means to obey, and asks God for the practical wisdom it 'lacks' in any such case, will, by this means, succeed far better in the obedience than by making this artificial distinction between His commands. A strong light, but of a different kind from what is often assumed, is thrown upon this by the great saying of Samuel, so often quoted against its plain intention, 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,' etc. (1 Sam. xv. 22).

Without doubt, if this Commandment as to the Sabbath Day stood among the other details of the religion and law of Israel, like that of the seventh year, of the Passover, etc., and without any earlier reference, we would reasonably regard it as we do them. But it does not. And so who-

ever wishes candidly to ascertain its due place for us in God's Word is bound to consider well these questions, viz., Why was this placed among the 'Ten Sayings,'<sup>1</sup> which were first uttered with a very awful voice from the top of the mountain Sinai, covered with black clouds, and every word heard by that vast multitude of some two million people assembled before it? All those other sayings were, as no one questions, the duties of mankind 'from the beginning.' And not only are they thus distinguished from everything else in that sacred 'Law,' in being heard by every one from the voice of God, but also, when these came to be written down for exact and sure transmission to after-time, it is not, like all the rest, by the hand of the great Moses. But it is said again and again that these were written upon tables of stone 'with the finger of God.'<sup>2</sup> It would be a trifling evasion of the plainest words to confound this, as if it were a mere figure of speech, with the writing of the prophet by inspiration.

Again, when we come to examine the words in detail, we find this distinguished above all the other Commandments by a reference to 'the beginning.' Why is that so? It is a *remarkable* fact. It cannot be without any significance or purpose. It is among the 'things which belong to us,' and are 'revealed' for duty; and so it is our right

<sup>1</sup> Not 'Ten Words,' as some affect with great precision to render the term as found, e.g. in Numb. xxxiv. 28, making nonsense of it, as it seems to me. What was uttered from heaven and written on the tables of stone certainly was not 'ten words.' Nor does the term '*debarim*' require to be so translated to be at all accurate. (The Revised Version makes a weak and unwise concession by putting in the margin, 'Heb. *words*.) It quite corresponds to *λόγος* in Greek; like it, derived from the verb 'to say.' Thus its primary sense is of sentences, propositions, or *sayings*, rather than of the separate words which make them up. Just so the LXX. uses *λόγος* for the Hebrew *debar*, in the very sentence out of which this question arises (Exod. xxxiv. 28). No doubt it is good English to render it 'the words,' meaning *all* the words which make up those ten great sayings of God in which He declared His chief Commandments. And so the Greek and Hebrew versions alike repeat the word, where ours uses two different terms; it might have been (it is not necessary to say, it *should* have been) thus rendered: 'And He wrote upon the tables the sayings (A.V. words) of the covenant, even the ten sayings' (A.V. commandments). But the decisive authority is that of Our Lord calling them 'the Commandments' (*ἐντολάς*).—St. Mark x. 19, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxi. 18; Deut. ix. 10; also Exod. xxiv. 12, 'Which,' says God, 'I have written,' and xxxii. 16, 'and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.'



(and our duty) to search out its meaning. I have never seen any attempt to account for this in the reasonings of those who distinguish this one from the rest of the Ten Commandments as a mere Jewish law.

The record of the wonderful mystery of God resting from His work of creation has this very remarkable fact added, 'And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.' What are we to learn from this revelation to us?—what that concerns *our* work and duty? Whatever we may think of 'the creative days,' for us was now begun the succession of such days and nights as we have had ever since. For God not only to 'bless' one in seven of them, but to 'hallow it,' was to distinguish and consecrate it in some way for us men, to whom He reveals the fact. Thus even for innocent man a frequent division of his days was now established, so that when six had been passed in his ordinary avocations, the next was hallowed and sanctified to God. In some way he was to spend its time more exclusively in the thought of Him than the ordinary days. And so the next day he was to begin his own common life, to be interrupted again by another holy seventh day in its place. Thus, if there were no 'Fourth Commandment,' this passage, standing alone, would suggest to any thoughtful and reverent student of the Book that there was such a primitive institution of a holy seventh day of religion, even if it had been utterly lost in the later corruptions.

And this is the only reasonable way of accounting for the early traditions even among men of false religion of a sacred division of time by seven days (Lenormant, etc.). The particular day may have been lost among them, or even everywhere before Abraham, or while the Israelites were in Egypt (and is, in fact, of impossible certain observation all over the world at the same time, on account of the loss of time as we proceed west), and not literally restored with the law of Moses. But that in no way affects the principle, and the use of it. And now in the Church of God it is fixed for us on a yet higher principle, and by yet higher authority.

As for the difficulty some find, that no mention of this

observance is made in the history of the Patriarchs, nothing until the Commandment was given at Sinai, I have already noticed that this is as true, for instance, of the Third. If it be said that there is this great difference, that the keeping of every seventh day holy as a part of primitive true religion would have been an *observance* so frequent that it is more reasonable to expect some mention of it in the details of life of such men as Abraham, and his son and grandson, if not of their ancestors, than any allusion to the sin of blasphemy,—that is a fair suggestion in the comparison.

But, on the other hand, let us never forget that faith and reverence are indispensable conditions in our study of the Word of God. This history was not written subject to our criticisms, with a purpose to anticipate and escape all our objections to its details or omissions. It was meant for humble and reverent souls, who might find good discipline for that penitent faith in God even in its silence, when He chose to tell one thing rather than another which we might be curious about. It is not an account of everything that occurred in those 2500 years, but a very brief sketch of so much of the history of mankind for that vast period as He saw best to give, as a preparation for the law of Moses, which was merely a preparation for the Gospel, 1500 years later. When we consider that the history of this vast tract of time is compressed within half the space which the concise Tacitus takes to relate that of one hundred years of the Roman Empire, we should not think of demanding such a mention as is in question, as the condition of believing what God has otherwise given us to understand.

But indeed this historical objection seems to me on other grounds quite mistaken. The keeping a holy rest on the seventh day by the Israelites is distinctly mentioned in the history before the giving of the Ten Commandments, or anything else of the 'Law;' and all the more conclusively as to this from that mention being *incidental*. (See Exod. xvi. 22-30.) And in agreement with this, the phraseology of the Fourth Commandment is unlike that of any of the others, in its beginning with the word 'Remember,'—an implication of something well known before. In fact, as we

have seen already, it has the very earliest and most plain historical mention of them all.

In the history, when the crowning of the Creation by that of man is complete, we have the record, 'And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.' This surely is historical. If not, nothing of the Genesis is. That of course is just what the anti-Christian would say. But *we* believe the history as the Word of God to us. This, indeed, is not a command of God to men, but it is the record of a fact. Standing there alone, it might be merely a profound mystery, —doubtless, in any case, like all else that is Divine, it does involve a great mystery. But have we any clue why it is 'revealed' to us? any connection of it with the life and duty of mankind? Certainly in the Fourth Commandment—for the Commandment refers itself directly to the mystery; most certainly in nothing else. The connection of the two is therefore beyond any question. The great fact cited in the Commandment is not by any means something which relates only to Israelites—something connected with their exodus from Egypt, and separation from the rest of mankind. On the contrary, its occurrence and record are exactly suited to *man* as *such*—to the first of them, just created in the image of God, and all alike who were to come after them. It is therefore most reasonable not to except this one of the Ten Commandments from the others, as regards their being a statement of the duty to God and man of every one of our race, from the beginning to the end.

Perhaps it would have been made easier for each one of us to believe and obey this (though no one can be sure of that) if there had been mention made of its observance in the history of the Patriarchs. But that cannot change the conclusive probability upon the face of this history, as we have now examined it, that this, like the rest of the Commandments, was in substance a part of true religion from the first, not unknown even to the Israelites (though neglected and almost forgotten), as they went out of Egypt after their living for many generations in a 'house of bondage' and a land of false religion. Then indeed it was, like the others, proclaimed anew, and the additional personal appeal made to this people, that God had instituted the 'remembering' of

it (as opposed to the forgetting, and at last utter loss of it, among all other peoples) as a sign and memorial between them and Him.

Thus, too, at the second proclamation of the Ten Commandments forty years after by Moses in the Deuteronomy (v. 12-15), each one of the people is bidden to '*remember* that thou wast a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.' It is notable that here the language of the Commandment is changed. It is no longer: 'Remember the Sabbath,' etc.—that is, 'Recall what had begun to be much out of mind,' etc.,—but, 'Keep the Sabbath-day,' etc., as they had now been doing steadily for a whole generation. The '*remembering*' is transferred in the later appeal to their awe of, and their gratitude toward, Him Who had done such great things for them as a people, the very chief of all this being to recall them to His holy Commandments, and to separate them from the false religion of all the rest of the world.

This is what the history, as God inspired Moses to write it, fairly teaches us. Without doubt, we now have greater teaching yet. That ancient and august covenant of Israel no longer exists for those who had Abraham for their father, much less for us. But that Scripture has been exalted instead of degraded by this. It has their Lord and ours as its Illuminator, and to Him we must promptly go for the final and best understanding of it.

Our Lord and Saviour gave great honour to the Ten Commandments. That is their very highest sanction in His Church. So they are recognised by it as His law for all mankind under the Gospel. Now it is to be noted that He made no such distinction of the Fourth from the others, as being inferior to them—only Jewish, and now obsolete,—which has been made by so many Christians in later ages. We have even a saying of His, which to me seems quite decisive against that, in His distinctly assuming authority over it, to decide the details of its observance, without reference to the words in which it was given at Sinai, for nothing else can be fairly made of this: 'The Son of

man is also Lord of the Sabbath;’ and also at the same time declaring that it ‘*was made for man.*’ How any of us can interpret this as meaning that it was only a Jewish rite, about to cease with the setting up of this ‘kingdom of heaven’ for all men, I cannot understand. After many times repeated study of the words, I cannot see how they can be fairly understood otherwise than as I have now showed.<sup>1</sup>

And so His Kingdom, as He has been always with it, has used His delegated lordship over these details, in leaving the mere seventh day in numerical order to the unbelieving Jews as one of their peculiarities, and using for the hallowed seventh part of time the day of Our Lord’s glorious Resurrection.

It is indeed the same Moses the prophet who records both the Creation and the Commandment. One who could think of him only as of a mere human writer of history might then, if he so pleased, guess that he had made the one to suit the other, *i.e.* invented the statement in Gen. ii., and inserted it there to accord with and give authority to the Commandment. But we Christians cannot say that. It is not a true thought. We could not, then, any more believe the giving of the Commandment upon his authority. We regard his history as written by him from inspiration of God, Who is therefore the real author of both statements.

This is equally true whether we treat his account of the Creation and of all before his own time as first placed in his mind by this inspiration at the time of writing, or as coming to him in earlier tradition and records from the first days when God did communicate it to men, and which He kept pure and true, to be thus at last by His inspiration adopted and recorded by His prophet Moses. No suggestion of ‘allegory’ can affect this at all. What does it mean then allegorically? What is the relation of this allegorical signification to the Commandment? None can be seriously imagined which does not make the duty in the Commandment as ancient and as general for all men as their creation.

<sup>1</sup> See also St. John vii. 22-44, where He seems to imply a greater sanctity and a greater antiquity for the Sabbath than for circumcision, though that is older than Moses.

This, then, was told to the first of our race in their glorious innocence and love of God, as one part of their religion, that every seventh day they were to rest from all labour, and regard their time as specially 'hallowed,'—that is, consecrated to the thought and worship of Him. As we would naturally enough think, there was no such *need* of this, as we can see now. The selfish worldliness which is prone to forget Him in our comparatively innocent labours and cares, not to say mere amusements or wicked self-indulgence—and needs the weekly pause; the oppressions of injustice and of poverty, to which religion opposes this respite from toil; the need of penitent prayer, and of the teaching of God's Word by His Church to both young and old, that we may truly believe on Our Lord and be saved, and for our own conversation with one another, and private reflection on these things—did not exist then. But it is enough that the Divine History thus tells us that the religious consecration of one day in each seven was 'made for man,' as such, from the very Creation. We can even conjecture that it was observed by those who as yet were not 'sinners,' and would have been so observed by all innocent men after them, in a pause from their usual work, in which they could have even more than their usual lofty and happy thoughts about the Most Glorious One, and more frequent acts and songs of adoration.

The substance of the Second and Third Commandments was also contained in their duty of loving God as a Spirit—the Unseen, Almighty, and Eternal—with spiritual awe and devout reverence.

Under the second general law, of loving our neighbour as ourselves, they had then each but one such object. Yet its spirit required also a self-forgetting love of all other creatures of God who might be the more or less happy for their conduct: thus to be kind and just to the brutes; to admire, please, and be grateful to the holy Angels of God, whom they (in all fair probability) knew to be sent to them for society, or information, or any other good. To others of their own kind, who, they were told, were to succeed in increasing numbers, to fill the world with the praise and love of God, they would have great duties of love, arising as the occasion took place.

In this lay all the germs of actual kindness, justice, and truth, and of self-forgetting and self-denying personal love, such as fills all our present ideal of human goodness. Its one immediate application was in tender and generous love of one another, as we now sometimes see it (alas! that we do not always) in conjugal devotion on both sides; and this with that holy purity of thought and act, which is one chief part of human virtue now.

When we compare this whole of human nature and life then with that whole now, does it not seem wonderful, beautiful, and great? Why any the less so really that it has no terrible exceptions, no contrasting foil of a dark, ungodly, and selfish wickedness? Are we the ones to despise its 'insipid' goodness? Nor can we reasonably suppose that it had not, as well as we, 'a better country' and life in prospect. To love God, Who is love itself, is even for us a title to such glory and joy as no eye here has seen. As they perfectly loved God, so doubtless too they looked forward to His 'Presence, where is *fulness* of joy.' But most distinctly, too, they were free thus to love God with obedience, or to choose otherwise with fatal consequence. And in fact we know that such a test was given them as to eating the fruit of 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.'

However, some modern Christian writers of great note, intoxicated, as it seems to me, by the poisonous fumes of a notion which is in all the air now, of a universal 'evolution' (p. 157, etc.), to which they fancy all things we know must be adjusted, give a different account of even innocent and primitive man. I refer now particularly to the article 'Gradual Development of Revelation' in *Modern Scepticism*. The learned and pious author is first taken with a theory of an 'evolution' of 'Holy Scripture,' which I think can be clearly shown to be erroneous (see p. 70, etc.), and by this he seems constrained to argue that the first man's intelligence and religion must have been quite contemptible. He ingeniously introduces this with an amusing account of the other idea, as set forth in the *Génie du Christianisme* of Chateaubriand, by which means it is made to appear that this is all a piece of French poetry, with the characteristic

artificial prettiness, yet also the absurdity, of French poetry or sentimental prose.

Yet he need not have gone so far for illustration. He could have found, not indeed the conceits of Chateaubriand, but the noble idea of greatness in primitive man in Augustine (*Civ. Dei*, iv. ch. 10, 11, 12 *et passim*), and all the great Fathers; and in an English divine who was never thought to be either dull or silly, either an ignorant or a fanatical enthusiast; in Dr. South's sermon upon the creation of man. Comparing that wonderful creature, fresh from His great Maker's hand, 'in His Own likeness,'—with the very intellectual Greeks at their best, he says: 'Aristotle was but the rubbish of Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise.'

Compare with this the modern writer (p. 237): 'The revelation to Adam is represented as being of the simplest kind possible. In fact, it is difficult to conceive how anything beyond a very simple and partial revelation could be possible in the very infancy of humanity. It amounts to little more than the revelation of God as a personal governor whose will must be obeyed. A command is given; that command is broken, and a punishment is inflicted; and then mankind is represented as cast out of Eden into the wild, uncultivated world. It is necessary to realise the extreme simplicity of this history, and the imperfect character of the revelation; the more so because there is some temptation to imagine Adam and Eve as being in possession of more knowledge than Scripture attributes to them. Scripture in reality attributes no knowledge to them, but rather represents the tree of knowledge as having been the cause of their fall. Philosophically speaking, we may describe the condition of things in Eden as being the dawn of man's religious consciousness,' etc.

I am astonished at this, if I understand it. We have already seen what of great and blessed knowledge of God and of all good is implied in the Divine story of man's creation and of the first days in Eden. It is a strange suggestion from a Catholic Doctor that the tree which was to tempt and ruin mankind meant all knowledge, and that the first step of man toward distinct 'religious consciousness'



was to be his crime and degradation, and would hide God's face from him by sin. 'Consciousness' (*self*-attention and *self*-reflection) is, as to knowledge, far below knowing God. And did he not know Him as we even in the light of the Gospel cannot yet? The knowledge of conscious aversion and separation from Him, indeed, he had not. But was not that other knowledge greater, which he had before, which belonged to innocent love, and which he had now lost? How came it to be that, in passing out of that 'dawn' into day, as this writer would have it, we have soon a brother's murder? and that in a few generations this was the actual 'evolution'—'that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'? Has not the writer, in his desire to find a *modus vivendi* with the 'modern thought,' utterly confused the true idea of a revelation made to man while still in the undimmed 'image of God' with that needed to rescue him from so dreadful a fall?

It is indeed necessary 'to realise the extreme simplicity (exquisite and sublime) of this history.' But what of the 'imperfect character of the revelation'? Yes; of the revelation of this to us. We are not told everything in detail of what this glorious man knew. But we do not 'realise' it at all if we empty it of all its noble significance, according to the mind of the Church in all ages, and interpret it thus: 'Man, created a simpleton, and only beginning to be intelligent when he began to be wicked.'

I find no trace of this notion in the early Christian ages, except in the erring heretics, the Gnostics of various sorts, and in Pelagius afterwards, and later yet in his partial imitators in the middle ages, Scotus, etc., and still later some of the Jesuits. And now it appears rather in the shape of a timid concession to the popularity of the new scientific notion, probably to be rejected with scorn by that which will allow no compromise.

Or is the argument that, as few words are used to reveal to us what was revealed to the first man and known by him, therefore his intelligence was correspondingly small? To state this is almost to refute it. But observe the actual words: 'So God created man in His Own image.' Does

that suggest so poor an opinion of his mind? 'And let them have dominion over all the other living creatures.' Man, then, is to be not only the greatest of these, but also the Maker's vicegerent in ruling over them. And this? 'And Adam gave names to all,' etc. In this alone lies a suggestion of such brightness and vigour of thought as none of us now are equal to, with all the accumulated knowledge of these six thousand years.<sup>1</sup>

And this notion is equally out of place in the tremendous tragedy of the Fall. Was it upon such a weak and empty mind that fell the responsibility of the great choice? Was it for the mere blunder of a thoughtless boy that the voice of glorious justice, and even greater and more glorious love, uttered that sentence, 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake'? Does it any way agree with the terrible facts of human baseness and misery now, instead of the blessedness of Paradise?—with the fact that it is only since that fatal attempt to know more that men actually '*love darkness rather than light*'?—with the great summary by St. Paul of most of human history from the Fall to the Advent, that 'the invisible things of God from the very creation of the world were clearly seen, . . . even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, *when they knew God*, they glorified Him not as God, . . . but became vain in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was *darkened*. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools'? Even *they 'knew God'*. And that little and undimmed part of the glorious light, which had survived and come down to them from Adam, was the highest of all their knowledge, the most ennobling action and discipline of man's understanding, though they would not have it so. Or will any one say that innocent man was ignorant of this, and that it was one of the achievements of the Fall?

But least of all does the notion any way agree with the

<sup>1</sup> How does the notion in question accord with the fact that man, above all else created, is pronounced 'very good' (and even this does not convey the powerful and splendid meaning of the Hebrew original)—as well as we may comprehend this most grand and beautiful praise from the Maker,—which has perhaps its highest interpretation in our generation in the glorious air of Haydn, 'With verdure clad,' as sung with such a voice and transport of devout rapture by Jenny Lind?

glorious mystery of Redemption by Him Who was 'born of a woman,' to begin life with innocence, and to keep it such—for one thing, as our example,—and to be 'the last Adam.'

Without doubt, there is a most profound, an awful mystery in the fact that the turning-point of the destiny of mankind was to be in the question whether Adam would prefer knowledge of other things to love of God. Then, if we insist upon interpreting this to mean that for the first of them, the crown of all the great creation, to remain innocent, men must always continue to be silly, the plain duty and only sort of safety for us now is to know and think as little as possible. What can we imagine, then, of the perfect obedience and love of the holy Angels? Would man have defeated the gracious Will of his Maker by *not* disobeying Him?

But while to pretend to comprehend this all, may be in the very direction of the first sin, we may fairly think that the trial was in desiring to know what the Most Blessed One—Whose Will should by love have been dearer to them than all else—did *not* reveal, and that in so choosing lay the possible fall. And the like in us now is repeating that mistake, under whatever fine words we may conceal it.

Does not this fairly include any of the 'schemes' of theologies, to 'justify the ways of God to man,' in what is altogether beyond the comprehension of such small creatures and wretched sinners as we, who should only too thankfully and obediently receive His grace, without expecting to know why man was ever created to undergo such a trial. All such theories have been alike failures, and must be so. This one, which suggests that wilful wickedness against God is a higher step in life than constant obedience and love, and assumes that man could not have the goodness and happiness he was intended for until he had gone through a process of disobedience and degradation, is perhaps the most monstrous of all.

If it be asked in reply, What, then, is your account of the origin of evil? I have only to say that I have no account to give of it more than the simple Divine history, which follows after the account of the innocence and glory of primeval man. Further than this, I believe the matter to be

entirely beyond the comprehension of myself and my fellow-men, and that for us to do what we can to be saved from this ruin by the grace of God, and to help our fellow-men to the same, will require all our thought about it, which will only be wasted upon these fruitless speculations to the hindrance of that.

It is one of those instances in which 'philosophy' has acted (and, in fact, the whole thought, while out of place in Christian truth, is found in substance not only in Plato, but in his predecessors in heathen philosophy) to obscure the truth of religion as we have it from God Himself. This, and all of its 'evolution,' can only be maintained by virtual denial of the fall of man. The rejection of the idea of sin in man, and only reckoning him, such as he is, to be an irresponsible *result* of the *past*, is a necessity of the new 'evolution.' A most true and glorious mystery it is that out of this tremendous evil the salvation of God has wrought greater glory. But was it good, and not evil, that required such a redemption? Did man step from obscurity of imbecile innocence into light of greater knowledge by that disobedience? Did he rise in rank when he fell in goodness? Was 'death by sin' 'a thing to be desired to make one wise'? I thought that was the dreadful *mistake* of Eve. We must recoil from such fallacies, and magnify the glorious grace of God to us in our innocent first nature, while we adore the even greater grace which has called us out of that darkness into which we then stepped, and fell backward,—into 'the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.'

There was, as we know, one command of God, which was a very small limitation of their enjoyment of the good and beautiful things of the world made for their dwelling, and over which they were to 'have dominion.' For food was not only a necessity of their life, but, by the love of God, made, as it still is, one of its real pleasures. Many delightful fruits of tree and vine were thus theirs to enjoy. Only one was pointed out which they must not eat. No reason was given for this but His Will, yet they were also told that the forbidden act would cause their death. I suppose that to all who think about this there is here a great mystery, and that we may well conjecture that there is in the whole story a deeper

meaning than we see in the mere words. And he who can consider it only an *allegory*, and be sure that he interprets it as such, according to the Gospel (without which he *cannot* be right), may do so. Yet, on the other hand, the more I think of it the more I am persuaded that we can only wisely and safely take it as it reads, and wait until God shall reveal to us more than thus appears. To pronounce it 'allegorical,' and then transmute it into any of our fancies, even if we call them *philosophies*, seems the very height of self-deluding folly.

And there is enough for us to learn in the literal story. All other duties were then entirely easy for a healthful and innocent pair, alone in the world. Why should they not love God perfectly, and one another as themselves in all these things? Yet their chief glory and destiny was to do this *of free choice*. So such an occasion of choice was made for them. They would have had enough for all their needs with but a little part of what was freely given them. But only one such thing was reserved, so that they might please God with cheerful love, in doing without this upon His command. And it was called (with a mystery which has only been deepened by trying to explain it) 'the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' It does seem to point to that great snare of disobedient pride and self-will in all ages since, and which perhaps discloses itself in the very attempt to explain it: the preferring to be independent of God, by knowing something (or fancying we do), to the neglect of His love, and of humility toward Him, if not in direct disobedience and defiance.

If this be so, we now, by objecting to this test of loving obedience as 'arbitrary,' or unreasonable, and making such other interpretation of the words as satisfies our minds, the condition of our believing it, would be simply another instance of what had such vast consequences then. This would be even far more senseless and ridiculous than for a little child to set up 'the rights of man' against some command of noble and loving parents, which was not, and could not be, explained to him. Certainly there was no wrong done to them, and none seen in it by them when the command was first made known.

And how could they possibly disobey it? One at least

of the answers to this question is that there now appeared upon the scene another person yet, whom we know by later revelations of God to have been a powerful and wicked spirit—once a holy Angel of God, who, with others like him, had in pride revolted against the Eternal and Almighty King. Thus this guilty one sought to bring the new order of mankind into his own case.

We may fairly suppose that this temptation to disobey the one command, which was the actual test of their obedient love, was in a misuse of that *desire to know*, which is a part of the original human nature, good and praiseworthy if used according to the true purpose of our life—to love and praise God ; but in other cases—as of restless or selfish curiosity, of pride or presumption—an unrighteousness like any other. We may suppose that, when they are tempted with the knowledge to be thus acquired, the love of God in their hearts at first repels it as being against His dear Will ; then the suggestion is made that this ‘arbitrary’ command is selfish and jealous tyranny, and that the danger of death from the disobedience is imaginary, an empty threat to scare them from what they rightly desire. Loving faith in the Ever-Glorious and Blessed starts back from this at first. Yet desire recurs, and the suggested ambition of climbing to the very heights of knowledge, on which the Maker has heretofore seemed at such an unapproachable distance. So faith in His truth wavers, and desire increases with every moment in which it is now indulged, and that ‘love of Him with all the heart’ recedes before love of self, especially in an ambition to know what He has expressly withheld from knowledge. It was the wife who began this ‘departing from the living God’ by listening to a tempter, instead of, as long ages after did one in descent from her, encountering the same tempter in a far more strenuous and tremendous struggle, drive him off baffled, by faith in God. And the husband whose manly force of will should have even rescued her, stood by, not resisting, and thus even half encouraging, the temptation to both.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RELIGION AFTER THE LOSS OF INNOCENCE.

AND they made the wrong choice. She first yielded to curiosity, desire, and pride, and sacrificed to these the supreme love. Then he, weakly as well as perversely, followed her in the sin. It was done.

From the Divine story of what followed we may in some degree understand how they, while perhaps at first relieved from fear of the threatened death, began at once to feel that a chill of spiritual torpor and degradation had fallen upon them. The sun shone as brightly as ever; the trees, and flowers, and living creatures all around them were the same. Yet they felt that somehow it was another world, and began to understand how in the day they did this they would 'surely die.' They had a sort of new freedom—from loving obedience to God; but with this a sense of being in base bondage to evil. Something more they *knew* 'of good and evil;' but it was to know that they had lost the 'sweetness and light' of good, and become entangled and bemired in the evil. The new sensation of guilty shame came over them. A voice in their hearts seemed to say, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you.' Despair and anger and bitter pride rose in resentment, for the thought of repentance did not come into their minds. How could it? The love of one another felt the crushing force of the dreadful blow which had broken them away from the love of God. It was cruel reproaches, and not the sweet words of tender pity, which they exchanged in their first great sorrow. The joyful courage of innocence and love was gone for ever.

They 'hid themselves' for the first time. (And from whom? From Him from Whom no secrets are hid; from Him, away from Whom there is no light of knowledge or joy or love; from Him Who, until then, had been their greatest love and joy—even more than they were to one another.) And then came the inevitable encounter with the Holy One. 'And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?' That voice has been thus questioning us—all the generations of man, and each soul of us—ever since.

As for so much that is said, whether in reproach or apology, of the 'anthropomorphism' of this whole Divine narrative, I see no real occasion whatever for such criticism. If we accept the history, as we do, as God's Word to us all, the reproach is only irreverent and silly. Nor to one so believing can the apologetic be proper. Here is God's way of relating this to man. It is an honour and a blessing to us that it is done in such a form as we can best comprehend. The idea of such a creature as I inspecting this, and then expressing my dissatisfaction that the Creator did not inform me of these events in a way more suitable, in my judgment, to the Creator's Nature, is transcendently foolish. Pray, how would we have it better done?

For my own part, I am more and more lost in admiration of the energy and vivid reality with which, in these few words, that vast transaction is related to us, as a part of the knowledge we need for our repentance and salvation. See the horrible wickedness with which the world of mankind has been filled through all human history, and then compare all the other attempts to account for this—whether in the fables of the Zend and the Vedas; the speculations of Plato and his fellow-philosophers, either before or after him; the strange and tedious inventions of the Gnostics; or the dumb and senseless 'evolution' of the Agnostics. How far beneath the sublimity and self-attesting simplicity of truth in this very brief account of how 'God made man perfect, but they have sought out many reasonings,' are they all! With a few strong and vivid strokes we have a picture, in which all the actors live, and move, and speak to us, in a way that all our most elaborate abstract words and metaphysical distinctions could not approach. And this is what we need



to apprehend and feel what it was for man to fall, so that we 'may be saved through Christ for ever.'

It would be a just punishment of those who are dissatisfied with this 'anthropomorphism' to be made to relate the same things in their superior way, and to have such a faint and feeble and utterly and essentially inadequate account of primeval man and his fall—the weaker the more they elaborated it—set here, in contrast with what we read in Genesis ii, iii. Nor need we Christians apologise to one another for it as being a hindrance to the most spiritual religion, or warn the plainest people against the error (in our apprehension) of thinking of the tempter of mankind as really persuading them to sin, or of God as actually forbidding something as a test of obedient faith, and speaking to them after the sin in just displeasure. The actual danger is always altogether the other way—in men not believing that Satan tempts, or that God is the Lord and Judge. I inquire of my own experience, and I know that this narrative never obscures, but rather makes the clearer my sense of God's being a Spirit, and requiring me to 'worship Him in spirit and in truth,' and of all the glorious and transcendent truth of 'His Eternal Power and Godhead' and His Infinite Love. I observe the same matter among my fellow-men, and I note that it is the very ones who receive all this history with the least qualification of the sort who have the most reverence, spiritual apprehension, and obedient love of God in their life.

The great fact for our present inquiry is that by these events the religion of man necessarily underwent a great change. The former religion of perfect and happy love is destroyed by his own act. It might have been so without any relief or hope. It might have been that there would be no more a 'Word of God' to man, no communication from Him to those who had chosen to lose His love for them by departing from their blessed love of Him. That is what they risked, and deserved, and in a manner felt. But that dreadful thing was not to be, thanks to the 'kindness and love of God Our Saviour towards man.'<sup>1</sup> He speaks to

<sup>1</sup> The whole of this remarkable sentence (Titus iii. 4) should be carefully examined in the present study.

them again. This first encounter is of necessity terrible to them. (They try to fly from it.) Displeasure prevails in His words. The death which was foretold is adjudged and executed (as it had already, *ipso facto*, been in part), in their fall, both from being then so near to Him in goodness and felicity of love as also in some physical pains and disorders. But there is a gleam of hope for the future—hope for the penitent and humble man, who trusts in God and waits upon Him, who submits to all His just punishment of sin, and sets out to strive toward restoring his soul to perfect and obedient love in every act and endurance. This hope is given to him in a mystery of how ‘the seed of the woman’ shall ‘bruise the head’ of the tempter. Like all the other brief and powerful statements of this history, we do not know how much of this may have been more understood by those concerned then than is disclosed in the words as revealed to us. But we do know for our own use that it meant the great Redemption, which is our blessed knowledge of God as Christians. Evidently the relief was to come by degrees. But every soul could know enough to trust in the mercy of God with penitence, and with patient attempts to do His Will with love, and continual penitence and repentance after each failure in this.

To begin with, they must leave the delights of Eden, which belonged to innocent piety. There must be toil and pain in life, such as they had not known before. But the fear and care of all this were not to be compared with the consolations and hope. They might (they *must*) be religious yet.

In what did that possible religion consist, in the main? First, of course, as before—and because it was still the mankind who were made for this,—it was the law to ‘love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,’ and to ‘love the one near thee as thyself.’ This was to be the new, imperfect religion of attempt, just as it had been before the perfect one of God’s Will and image. It was to be now a religion of *trial*, in both senses of that word. By their persistent honesty in this attempt they were to make the choice again between life and death—and this was to be, not by the constant, perfect goodness of love, but by a *trying* to do this, with

humble faith in God's mercy to help the attempt and to forgive the failures.

Of course, too, the rules in detail of the great law, and its application to occasions as they arose, must now take new shapes. The Commandments of God must be much more in the form of 'Thou shalt not.' And so all actual duty becomes more like that later form of words, the Ten Commandments. There is no better method of inquiring into it now than according to the details of that great statement of religious duty, as made some thirty generations afterwards.

Take first, for instance, the Seventh. It is a most profound and meaning incident that the very first demonstration of the change from innocent to sinful man was in the shame of bodily decency. It therefore needs, in a true history of religion, to be searched to the very bottom. Yet the process, however necessary, is a very painful one—at least to some minds. It is so in its own nature, and made even more so now by the fashion of our age, which is, in the main, divided into two extremes of treatment of this—the one full of timidity, aversion, and evasion; the other, bold, hard (not to say shameless), shallow, unspiritual, and false. The former may seem to be in the better direction, but it really helps on the mischief of the latter. We cannot do our duty as to that dangerous part of the common human nature either by attempting to extirpate it or by treating it slightly. It cannot be torn out of the bodily life of either of the sexes, or separated from sympathetic effects upon all other parts of our corporal existence in this world. It cannot be loosened from its interlacings with all our other thoughts and sentiments, and its place by God's Will, of one of the chief occasions for our choice between good and evil.

It would therefore seem plain that it must receive proportionate notice in religious thought, training, and action. Yet, on the other hand, it is most true that all prevention or cure of its evils needs the holy seriousness and reserve of modest shame, and that these evils begin by the neglect, and grow to fearful and fatal force by any discarding, of this.

Nevertheless, there is always care needed lest of the very garment which decency throws over it, and of the very

averted eyes of modesty, this sin should make an ambush for its victims. Some good people who have to treat of human life, from shame and aversion to all this (an abuse of the true instinct of virtue) leave it out of all notice. But as this is all but (or quite) impossible, they are forced at last to say something of it. Then, fearful of doing harm by the very suggestion, they speak of it in a very covert way, almost hoping that they will not be understood; and finally, in effect, dismiss it as soon as possible as of little practical importance, or as not concerning the 99-100ths of decent persons, but only a few monsters of coarseness and shameless perversity. But as this is not according to fact, they thus, in fact, do almost more harm than good, and certainly fail of the good that needs to be done.

In the opposite extreme, some lay hold of the matter boldly, as affecting (as it does) all life in every soul of us. (The actual exceptions to this must be rarer than those of total colour-blindness, which every one supposes to be outside of complete human nature, and so not taken into account in what is to be said to all.) They entirely refuse to treat it as abnormal, or as one of the less important accessories of all life, social and spiritual, as well as bodily. And in this they are entirely right.

But then they proceed, whether as philosophers or poets (even some of the chief of these last, if Goethe be reckoned such, as being also one of the greatest of the philosophers, and many of the most famous authors in all languages, and, it is hardly too much to say all modern French literature), or as mere naturalists, with the 'severe love of truth in science,'—not merely the anatomists and physiologists, so engrossed in the study of our bodily mechanism as to absurdly subjugate all else to that, but also the metaphysical 'biologists,' who declare in so many words that the great purpose of human life is the reproduction of other human life, and so that all our other faculties arrange themselves around this august centre, and should subserve it.<sup>1</sup> It is steadily disclosing itself as a principle of the new religion, which 'modern thought' is proceeding to impose upon all

<sup>1</sup> Even the refined and intensely 'literary' Matthew Arnold rather accepts this, as demonstrated to him by M. Littré.—*Lit. and Dogma*, p. 19.

who are submitting themselves to it. It accords exactly with one of its notions, that human 'immortality' is not at all personal, but consists in the blessed thought that when you and I no longer exist, our race will continue in other like generations of souls, each of which in a few years will utterly cease to be.<sup>1</sup> Such as will do this, according to Christian terms and exigencies of form, will assume that all older Christian belief, to which this is utterly abhorrent, is not the 'Word of God,' but our former apprehension of that, which we are learning to understand better by means of the 'book of Nature' and all that.

However, they are wrong (and so was I) in assuming that this is a *new* religion. There is indeed only one real remedy for the perilous difficulty in our nature now in question. God made the marriage of one man and woman as the law, bond, and limit of this. He Himself then celebrating that marriage, every one since is that repeated, and thus it is 'those whom God has joined together.' Every act or thought which anticipates or otherwise profanes this is a sacrilegious sin against Him. Truth and safety, then, lie in confiding this matter chiefly to religion. However other sins may be, in a measure, excluded or corrected by human morals or human law, nothing but to be face to face with the holy law of God, nothing but the penitent fear of Him, can control this. Nothing but a lifetime of such 'nurture and admonition' can fix a character of such steady purity; nothing but the deepest religious earnestness can bring back a soul from any far wanderings that way.

That first shame of Eden is repeated now whenever a youth that has grown up in what is the nearest to that Paradise of anything now on earth—a Christian home—gives its first look at some art galleries or shop windows of our great cities, or even when, in the chamber heretofore sacred to the Eye that with gracious love 'seeth in secret,' reads much of the most-admired poetry and fiction. It learns then what it is which this literature and 'culture' means by *love*, and tells it that it is the noblest and sweetest thing in life. And then it soon learns to blush at its own modesty, instead of at the baseness which insulted it.

<sup>1</sup> See *Scotch Sermons*, p. 11, etc.

There never has been but one religion which really took the other side, and that is the one whose beginnings we now trace, and which we almost all in Christendom, after a manner, profess. Yet what passes for the most refined and liberal civilisation among us—including some in the communion and even ministry of the Church—stares and sneers at this 'severe' virtue, and puts it to shame with the reproach of 'prudery,' or rustic ignorance and awkwardness. The evil grows with our refinements, luxury, and science. He who would resist it, even by mere silent example, by refusing to smile at or admire its displays, is spoken of with contempt even by Christian men and women.<sup>1</sup>

For many ages—whether in Canaan or Syria, on the banks of the Nile or the Euphrates, in India and China—even with the Persians, whose traditions kept nearest the primitive truth,—with the intellectual and elegant Greeks, and the more so the more they grew to be such, and the comparatively severe Romans, as well as through savage tribes roaming on the earth—religion actually made this impurity a part of itself. There are, to be sure, in them all traces of the essential truth that religion requires purity of soul and body in this very respect, and is the one chief hope of escape from the evils of its loss for our kind. Such traces were some rites of Diana and Vesta, and others like these among the other Pagans, and the praises of female chastity and punishments of adultery, which survived as a part of both religion and law. Yet, with a fearful and fatal inconsistency, none the less was this greatest danger to human goodness made a part of religion, and its very rites and legends the means to suggest evil passions and undermine virtuous self-restraint. The very worst of this mischief has been in all ages (and now as well as then) in making it a matter of jests, and at the same time confusing it with the highest and tenderest sentiments of human society. One religion only has kept firmly to the office which God has given to it, of being the salvation of men from all this self-defilement and self-destruction.

'Comparative religion' indeed! Will those refined and

<sup>1</sup> This was written long before the terrible disclosures of this corruption in the chief city of Christendom which lately (August 1885) startled the world.

fastidious people, made what they are in this (or in its pretence) by Christian surroundings and education, go from this severe plainness of our Scriptures to the 'sweetness and light' of Greek poetry—and indeed all ancient literary remains, except the Christian Scriptures? If they have no heed for History, let them go and see with their own eyes on the rock walls of Ellorah, in the chambers of the Pyramids, the tablets of Chaldea, and the remains of Pompeii, what the portrayed scenes and the profuse emblems of all those religions will tell them of this comparison.<sup>1</sup> Is it not better to give up even 'high art' and 'breadth of view' than to pay such a price for them? I know well what a philosophic account the ancient Pagans (and the modern?) give of this sort of religion—how they show with elaboration that 'fecundity' should be worshipped and glorified in art and scenic presentation, with emblems and processions.

Alone, and in absolute contrast with these (beginning with the modest shame of Eden), the religion in question never has (and never tolerates) any such mocking at the helpless weakness of the one sex to resist the coarse violence or the crafty seductions of its vanity by which the other seeks to defile and 'humble' it.<sup>2</sup> Still less has it anything, in story or ceremony, to stimulate the evil, or to deaden and overpower the instinctive shame which first resists evil desire. While the others—though still conscious that the Divine law condemns and forbids this—yet actually *deify* that which is thus forbidden, and worship as a *god* (or *goddess*) what is an 'abomination' to the only true God,—this one, even in its imperfect and temporary form, for one small people—to whom some allowance was then made for 'the hardness of their hearts' in this matter,—with an elaborate ritual, has not one such indecency, even the most disguised. On the contrary, any suggestion of this is repelled with abhorrence from all these holy things. That people were thus taught, as well as in history and precept, that God was displeased at all such

<sup>1</sup> Among a multitude of references and authorities for this, if such are needed, I give the place of honour to Mr. Darwin (*Descent of Man*, vol. i. p. 96); and the *religious* lesson which Chærea (in the *Eunuchus* of Terence) learns from such a painting.

<sup>2</sup> The very contrast between this ancient Hebrew thought and all that corresponds to it in other Classics is impressive.

evil imaginations, as well as deeds. Did that people invent this religion, or was it 'evolved' among them out of their different tendencies this way from the rest of mankind? Surely not. For both ancient and modern history show that, as a race, they have at least the average sensuality of human nature. One sort of religion makes this part of our nature a reason for indulging ourselves (and so does much modern poetry and science). The other sees here a degradation of a true and primitive nature, and an occasion of *denying ourselves*, in obedience to the Holy God.

And when we come to this religion in its full disclosure of the Will and grace of God, it is even much more spiritual and self-denying, not only as to acts, but as to 'the thoughts and intents of the heart,' and of our living 'not by sight' of present and earthly things, but by 'faith' as to spiritual, Divine, and eternal things. Thus we have both those exquisite teachings from the lips of the Last Adam, the perfect Man, and His life among us as such, for us to imitate more and more perfectly, 'till we all come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness' of Him. And in this example, so far from that part of our nature being the main purpose and spring of action, it is utterly excluded, as being only the inferior and temporary, at the best, and as altogether abominable in its abuse.

That religion, then, stands from the outset in absolute opposition to the others, in this signal respect, if there were no other. It does not avert its eyes from an important fact as to our life and conduct, after the manner of some sensitive, fastidious, and timid sentiment. It looks straight at it all, and takes right hold of it as one of the chief matters that concern man. But it does this most seriously, and entirely as to what is God's Will for our penitence and self-denial. It allots the true place and purpose of this in our nature, as God made man perfect. But it recognises our *actual* degradation in this as well as other things, and our inclination to an utterly selfish and defiling use of it, both for ourselves and toward others. It shows by frequent illustration and precept the thought and Will of God as to this. It reminds man continually that his chief concern now is a spiritual life, the love of God and man, and to 'look not



upon the things that are seen, but upon the things that are not seen,' and at last, and that soon, to enter upon another and eternal heavenly life, in which this thing has no part. It warns him that God abhors and will surely punish all such sins. It gives self-denial as to this one of the very highest places in the discipline of goodness here. It covers all with the robe of decency, watchful self-control, and lovely modesty. It exalts, refines, mingles with the noblest, self-forgetting love of others, and merges in holy religion itself that for which this part of our nature was made, and at all exists.

The same is doubtless true in substance as to the rest of the Ten Commandments, that their general meaning and spirit, if not details, were the law of God for mankind from this time forth. Violent anger also would be henceforth a part of the depraved nature, and a careful self-denial of it one of the chief duties. A terrible instance of this soon occurred in the murder of one of the first two brothers by the other. Very soon selfish greed would stir, and need watchful self-control, or end in robbery, either by craft or violence. In all these ways, and others, selfishness would tend to overpower the noblest instinctive feelings in the family life, about to develop, and to be so great a part of our conduct. Plain and solemn commandments of God would then be a great need of men, and we may wisely and gratefully believe would be supplied to them.

I have taken for granted that all which we now call 'morals' was from the first, as a matter of course, a part of religion,—that is, of the love and service of God. This I think I have already made plain (see p. 113, etc.), and that the later distinction made between these is artificial and specially misleading in such an inquiry as this. (Matthew Arnold is entirely right in saying that 'the antithesis between ethical and religious' is 'quite a false one.')

All good done was what God formed and intended men to do, and so made known to them. The first motive, then, for its performance was the Will of God, and such loving obedience was never then separated from the thought of Him.

For Religion in a more restricted sense, as to worship, there is no suggestion in the history of the first ten generations that the true was displaced anywhere among men by

any *false systems* of worship or belief. It may have been so, and that these are only *not mentioned* in that very brief chronicle. But the more natural understanding of it seems to me that the perversity of men in those days as regards religion was only in the neglect of the true, and not the invention of the false.

Be that as it may, selfish and passionate disobedience of the Will of God, and estrangement from His love, soon proceeded from that first fatal act in Eden to most terrible lengths. In a few generations this is the dreadful record: 'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' Nothing which the most fervid imagination, transported with religious ardour, has ever said of human sin, can equal the tremendous energy and the sweep of these solemn words. The more they are pondered, with reflection upon the fact that mankind began with this record, 'So God created man in His Own image,' the greater they seem in description of what followed as the result of a first mis-step from obedient love. Yet this account is qualified by, and is to be understood with, the other fact of this history, that some of the race escaped so great degradation, and were able in some measure to 'walk with God' in true religion. Such, I think, we may fairly suppose were both Adam and Eve, as penitent, and trusting in that gracious promise of future recovery made when they were sentenced for the first sin. Such certainly was their son Abel (see Heb. xi. 4), and also most emphatically Enoch—in the seventh generation after,—whose piety was so great that he is one of only two of our race who have been graciously relieved from physical death, which every other soul of us—even that of the Last Adam—had to suffer. And such also was Noah, in the tenth descent, who by this time, however, with his family, seems to have been left alone of men to love God, and, with penitent struggling against this sinful nature, trust in His forgiving mercy and promise of the perfect future deliverance.

In considering the primitive religion only in this more restricted sense, as to belief in God and worship of Him, we are much helped by two remarkable summaries of this

history in the New Testament. One of these—that of the true Religion, as continued by tradition among the smaller number—is in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. xi.) The other—of false religion by perverse deviation from the true—is in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (i. 18, etc.). Of this latter account we may now observe that in the beginning it very plainly means the period of our immediate inquiry. For, introduced in proof that *all* men at Our Lord's coming and the preaching of the Gospel—not merely Jews, who had had the written Word of God in the Old Testament, but all the souls of mankind,—were alike 'guilty before God,' as having disobeyed His holy Will ('who hold' *i.e.* restrain, resist, 'the truth in unrighteousness'), he says: 'Because that which may be known of God is manifest to them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen (at first plainly told, and ever after *recalled* or *suggested*) by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God,' etc.

The history which follows this is plainly that of the invention of new and false religions, idolatry, etc., which I suppose (see p. 221) not to have occurred until the later period, which is treated of in Chapter IX.; and so does not belong so immediately to our present inquiry. Yet the process there described is the same as had now begun. Man was presumptuous, disobedient, selfish, and sensual, instead of loving God with all his heart, with the reverent and cheerful obedience due to such a Person, and according to such love believing in Him for the greatest things that he can either know or hope. The account of the true primitive Religion is more full. 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we (and of course those elders of whom he was then directly speaking) understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.<sup>1</sup> By faith Abel offered unto God a more

<sup>1</sup> An express contradiction of the 'evolution' theory of Creation, as being only a chain of 'phenomena.' For we are here expressly told that the *blepomena*

acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; and was not found, because God had translated him : for he had this testimony, that he pleased God. For without faith it is impossible to please Him : for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. By faith Noah,' etc. But as the history of Noah belongs rather to the succeeding period, I leave him for the present, as indeed the last of that line of patriarchs, yet rather the first of the next.

This remarkable passage upon close inspection discloses several facts of great value to our present inquiry. And here let us recall (see p. 43, etc.) that important principle, that the history in Genesis can only be really understood by looking at it from the point of view of our Christian faith and of the New Testament. So that whenever we can find an allusion in that to this, or, what is still better, a retrospective glance over it, we are on firm ground as to the true understanding of the more ancient chronicle. And of this, if I am not very much mistaken, we shall find a chief instance in the two passages now before us. To return to the former (Heb. xi. 1-7), all we Christians are first associated with the 'elders,' and specially and emphatically with the eldest of our race, as believing in God. This we are told meant, first, a belief in Him as the Creator, according to His Own disclosure to the first man of these 'things which are seen.' And so it was simply 'by *faith* they understood that the worlds were framed *by the word of God*,' etc. The moment we reflect upon this, it is inconceivable, either that the first man should know this otherwise than by a direct 'revelation,' or that he, once knowing it, should not pass it down by true tradition to his children, and so in succession to all the other generations.

or 'present things' did not become such from the *phainomena*, or 'things which appear.' I was in hope that the rendering of the 'Revision' might here be substituted with advantage for that of the A.V., which does not quite give the force of the original, but found it upon scrutiny not only less elegant, but also less accurate in some points, and certainly less intelligible.

Otherwise we would have to suppose that Adam and Eve never spoke in the hearing of their children of so wonderful a matter of knowledge as this; or that those children, in succession, and so on with the succeeding generations, never noticed it enough to remember and talk of it. But add to this the certainty of its being positively cherished, and taught as a part of whatever true religion remained among men, and the conclusion is irresistible. With this also went the memories of their own first life in Eden and its ending. Even were these the dulllest minds that many decaying generations of evil passion, worldly cupidity and stupidity, and the miseries of a toilsome and precarious life had formed, they could have hardly failed to talk of these great things, and to keep alive in some degree the thought of the Great, August, and Unseen One, this 'Maker of all things and Judge of all men.' But such a supposition is gratuitously absurd. Far more reasonable is it to suppose that mankind had then a bright intelligence, and for many generations grew up with it, as well as with a soundness and vigour of body, which the most favoured few in later history have not enjoyed.

A very great help in resisting the decay both of their native powers and of the true memory of that high knowledge of God was the keeping of the holy seventh day (see *ante*, p. 194). That observance also, and of course, would not cease at once with the loss of innocence. It would even seem a greater necessity (as it is for us) for 'humble and penitent sinners,' and a relief from the constant 'labour and sorrow' with which bodily wants must now be supplied. It is very probable (what we see in our day suggests this) that some soon began to neglect it, and that, with the very large part of mankind who began to 'forget God' entirely, it was perhaps before long utterly lost. But surely not so with the others. That there is no distinct mention of it in the four pages, which are the record of 1600 years, does not at all contradict this probability. Indeed we have in the mention of Noah's observing the division of time by seven days an incidental notice of it that cannot be mistaken. How else *was* this? The attempt of some modern writers to explain the week as a 'natural' (that is,

according to men's mere notion of what they see in 'the heavens above') division of time by the 'quarters' of the moon is a most strained and unsatisfying theory. The truth is that these neither do coincide with the seventh day, nor were ever talked of until long after the week was in use. Any way, one who believes the third verse of the second chapter of Genesis as a Divine record sees at once, without any such far-fetched conjecture, what this means in the tenth and twelfth verses of the eighth chapter.

Then we are shown the first separation 'between the righteous and the wicked' in the different sacrifices offered by Abel and Cain. This tells us plainly that sacrifices were a part of true religion already. Various accounts and theories have been given by modern writers of this remarkable fact, that, from the earliest human history, in all actual religions, there have been such sacrifices, whether of gifts and offerings for the maintenance of religion, or, more specially, of living animals killed with ceremony as a part of worship. None of these discussions is to be compared as to thoroughness and just conclusions with that of Archbishop Magee *On Atonement and Sacrifice*, which remains a treasury of references for all who follow him, to which later researches only add fulness. In this he makes good the conclusion that these rites must have been made known to the first man by God, as a part of the mystery and prophetic disclosure of our redemption by Our Lord, which was to be transacted in the world some 4000 years later.

It is certain that both of the brothers brought 'offerings' to God as a well-understood part of their religion. But, as we have seen, 'by faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice' than Cain. Whether this was in that his memorial sacrifice of a lamb was the outward act of a faith in mercy to sinners—such as had already been commanded to them as a figure of the great Lamb of God,<sup>1</sup> while Cain's was such an offering as was merely proper for innocent gratitude, and therefore not *by itself* acceptable for man now, as seems best in accord with all that is related—or in just what this difference lay, has been much controverted. Any way, acceptable religion was now to be founded in obedient

<sup>1</sup> "Slain from the foundation of the world."—Rev. xiii. 8.

and penitent trust in God. Such was Abel's, and such was *not* Cain's. So in the latter we see the beginnings and progress of irreligion. Still, he has not yet utterly discarded religion, and God has not yet given him up to impiety, but even graciously remonstrates with his lack of penitence and with his angry pride, which is already scowling with resentment at his brother. 'If thou doest well (like Abel, in sacrificing that sin-offering which lies waiting for thee, too—there, at the very door), not only shall that be accepted by Me as his has been, but thou shalt have thy due place of honour as the elder brother' (Gen. iv. 6, 7).<sup>1</sup> Finally, in his dreadful crime we have that inseparable connection of any departing from the love of God with selfish and passionate wickedness toward *his* 'neighbour' indeed.

Another great part of this true religion doubtless was prayer. Those who then knew God with some penitent and humble love, would 'come to Him' in words of worship and supplication for what they needed of the Great Unseen. Nor can I think of what would more probably represent these prayers in substance than the wonderful form which the Saviour of the world afterwards gave to us sinners. It is indeed all but certain that in just those words it was never known until He gave it. The supposed discovery of some modern writers that the Lord's Prayer is only a scrap of some Jewish liturgy, well known to 'the scribes and Pharisees,' has no reason in it, as can be fully shown. But as beyond doubt it briefly comprehended all that sinful and penitent men have needed to ask of God, it probably in that brought us back to the substance of what those who first believed in God prayed for, when man were as yet not so *very* far gone from 'original righteousness' as we have all since become by the habits and tendencies of our fall.

Thus they still addressed Him as 'Father,' though they had already begun their journey away from His house, and to the 'far country.' The great parable in St. Luke is, in another aspect, also a beautiful picture of the divergence, then begun, and widening ever afterward, between 'them that (even so imperfectly) serve God and them that serve Him not.' And so

<sup>1</sup> This, among the different senses and translations which have been given of this passage, seems to me, upon the whole, the true one.

their first petitions were according to the immortal law of our life—for His glory and service,—and not for their earthly, or any sort of personal, advantage. Then they besought Him for the supply of their bodily needs, which still, they well knew, they must work and care for as diligently as if all only depended upon that. Then they asked forgiveness for their sins, and vowed meekness and patience toward those who wronged them, and besought that their conscious weakness of purpose might not be too severely tried, but that He would give them spiritual strength to resist this evil, whether it came upon them from their own passions, the suggestions of the world around them, or the terrible spiritual temptations which had brought on the first sin.

This religion was, then, one of love of God by faith, 'seeing Him Who is invisible' in His eternal power and glory, and trying to live for Him according to His Will in their creation. They confessed to Him how by their sins His Will was in fact *not* done on earth as it is in Heaven, but also with faith in His mystery of promise of a future great salvation of all men by means of One yet to be born of their race. With the most clear and keen perception of the necessities of labour, and of learning as to the world around them; in order to get daily bread, and all other worthy and needful objects of desire, they were still far too wise to fancy that these powers and this growing knowledge made them any way independent of the constant goodness of God. They must receive all, after all, from His gracious bounty; and as such they asked Him for it. They did not pray 'after this manner' because they were so ignorant and credulous, in comparison with us, but because they were *not* so worldly, blind, and self-sufficient. I suppose that, so far as any men of that age were thus religious, they approached to the sort of life described in a remarkable phrase of the historian as 'walking with God.'

But, as before observed, those who followed the pure religion were soon very few among many; and, as time went on, this disproportion increased. All except the descendants of Seth, including doubtless many others besides the 'Cainites'—at last including the greater part of the first mentioned—took the other part. For it is recorded later, that when, by the swift increase of numbers, there began to be multitudes both



of men and women,<sup>1</sup> the surging tide of evil broke through even among the noble family that had so far kept it out. Until then, by that same common sense that has always prevailed among the intelligently devout, the special intimacy of marriage and the family had by them been carefully guarded by making religion the ruling consideration in the choice of a wife. To consider in this first, *not* beauty and other like personal charms, even far less the low fierceness of animal desire, but sympathy in the love of God, kept these nearest alliances of the sons of Seth among their own pure society. But numbers, and rivalry, and evil example around at last broke over all this restraint, 'and the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of *all* which they *chose*.' Here we have already a glimpse of the brutish fierceness to which our sex have in this part of their nature descended from their noble original. Perhaps it suggests also, as some think, the beginning of polygamy, which is first mentioned of the fierce Lamech of the line of Cain.

And so from this time on only a single household appears to preserve and transmit this sacred deposit of truth and love. Yet exactly here in history, where mankind seem at last and altogether to have broken from all restraints, and overpowered all their best traditions and noblest thoughts in a headlong rush of evil passion, armed with strength of both body and mind, and with very long life,—just here the merciful love of God caused to shine the brightest spot of human example between the Creation and the Advent. The account is in the fewest and simplest words, yet it tells everything.

<sup>1</sup> 'When men began to multiply upon the earth, and daughters were born unto them,' etc. (Gen. vi. 4.) This, upon careful study of all the interpretations of the passage which have been maintained by scholars of great fame, seems to me clearly the only one which at all accords with the spirit of true religion. That which makes it an account of fallen angels (such described as 'sons of God') cohabiting with women, belongs only to, as it doubtless came from, those dark fables of magic which the later Jews got from heathen legends, and which have always been captivating to the superstitious. But this is not only out of harmony with all that bright and pure truth of God, but against the express words of Our Lord as to the angelic, compared with the present human, nature (St. Mark xii. 25). The suggestion of Lange *in loco* that *mi-chol*, 'of all,' denotes a sacrifice of all higher considerations, in the forming of marriage, to those of beauty and carnal desire, is very just.

One man holds so fast to the love of God, and lives so much in penitent faith and humble prayer, that this describes all his life: 'And Enoch walked with God.' And thus while, by the same tender mercy of God to us, there have been in all ages since many who, notwithstanding the prevalence of impiety around them, have 'feared God and worked righteousness,' we cannot mistake in saying that no one of them all ever equalled this man as such an example. As to the great Saints of both Testaments, who have had much more important parts in the *events*, that history, with its beautiful truthfulness, never fails to tell us of some of the imperfections of each one of them, of Enoch only is this the whole account of his life, that he 'walked with God.'

And also alone in this, and in accord with it, was the end of his life,—not that 'he died,' but that 'he was not, for God took him.' There came no day when there was left of him only in this world a lifeless body, which struck that awe and sorrow into those who survived to love him (and which no experience of ours ever lessens), and when that body had to be hidden from sight promptly by burial. He did not indeed 'live away,' to bear without relief the 'labour and sorrow' of surviving his vigour of body and mind. But he disappeared from among his people, and 'was no more seen.' Yet they knew from God Himself that he had been taken by Him to the rest which they, so far as they lived the same holy life, hoped from the Divine Mercy after death. If any one of old had raised doubts as to the meaning of the sublime and mysterious account of this in Genesis, *we* can never mistake it. It is a part of the grace of God to Christians that He tells them plainly that 'Enoch was translated, that he should not see death' (Heb. xi. 5).

This also discloses to us very plainly that a belief of life for a man in 'the world to come,' after he dies here, was a part of that primitive religion. Whatever we may think of the religion of any people in any later age, these witnesses and keepers of the first knowledge of God cannot reasonably be supposed to have lost entirely so remarkable and practically valuable a part of that truth and hope. Otherwise the translation of Enoch, after only a third part of the life of any of his ancestors, would have seemed to them a terrible pun-

ishment inflicted upon the most admirable piety. But any way, it is decisive for us that, as we have just seen, the Epistle to the Hebrews says that he 'did not see death,' and that 'God had translated him,'—that is, transferred him from life in this world to life with Him.

Looking now away from these very few who pursued the narrow way of life for God and in God, to the many others who crowded the broad road that led to destruction, we find among them, first and evidently, all the descendants of Cain. Yet I do not see that it is not probable that there were many other sons of Adam and their descendants. None such are mentioned. But, on the other hand, neither is the birth or life of any of his daughters, though I believe no one doubts that there were such.<sup>1</sup> According to the great, undeviating purpose of this history, that is specially mentioned which concerns the history of Religion. Thus Cain, Abel, and Seth are named; and the descendants of the latter as representing the preservation of Religion; of the former, as the chief representatives of its neglect, and the consequence of that.

Cain, terrified at the awful judgment of God upon his crime, withdrew with his own household from the rest, and 'buildded him a city,' far to the east.<sup>2</sup> There, quite as well as among their more religious kinsmen, they multiplied rapidly—a bold and ingenious race. Nor did all degradation of spirit, any more than of mind and body, at once extinguish religion, but corrupted and weakened it by degrees. We see this in the very names of some of the line of Cain—*Mehuja-el* and *Methusa-el*. And so it is among them that the arts had their most signal develop-

<sup>1</sup> The original marriage of brother and sister was not only a necessity of the order by which all men should be 'of one blood,' or descendants of a single pair, but had not then the slightest taint of the evil of such things in later generations, when this part of our disordered nature began to grow to a pitch of baseness that needed the holy law of absolute exclusion of those who are near in blood.

<sup>2</sup> The objection one sometimes hears to the credibility of this, that there were no multitudes of men to people a 'city,' is quite absurd when we consider that the first 'cities,' or *gnarim*, were not great Babylons or Londons, nor even the little cardboard cities of our American backwoods, but the smallest 'block-house,' which one or two families fixed for a protection against wild beasts or evil men (as probably Cain, against any indignant avenger of murder). Some of these doubtless grew into the greater cities of after-times.

ment—of instrumental music by Jubal, and of working in metals under Tubal-Cain, both sons of the proud and violent Cainite Lamech. It was evidently among the neglecters of religion that the greatest advance of worldly success of every kind took place. This is most instructive to all who will now wisely estimate these things. There is a very great tendency in our age—not only for those who oppose Religion, or those who, shrinking from this, only neglect it,—but among many sincerely Christian people, to make the most of arts, inventions, and all sorts of improvements in earthly things, rather than of the Divine and spiritual; so that these last-mentioned persons, especially the more intellectual and accomplished among them, are prone to maintain that Religion is true and great in proportion as they can show that it promotes these other things.

But this is utterly false ground, and therefore does great injustice to the truth of God. That stands upon its own superior merits; is just as true, necessary, and superior whether it favours or hinders the others. And while I doubt not that, upon the whole, mankind gain in all these ways (so far as they are innocent, beautiful, and useful) by the true knowledge and love of God, still this false method exposes the faith of men to the *vice versa* argument, that whoever thinks that, as a matter of fact, impiety has been more favourable to arts and inventions must reject the supreme truth.

This earliest history is therefore most valuable in securing us against that great delusion. All later history really confirms this. The Egyptians, with the basest superstitions—the Pagan Greeks, with their most miserable and abominable false religion, had far more ‘culture’ than the Israelites. The French and German<sup>1</sup> peoples are instances of it in our day, while even the nations of the English race are now beginning to illustrate the same portentous lesson,—this as to the most eager pursuit and quickest invention of these things through neglect of the higher. But it is of the great goodness of God then, as now, that these things can only

<sup>1</sup> The nation that has Luther as its greatest name for the sixteenth century now makes a demigod of Goethe, who has done more, with his splendid talents, to undermine all faith and godliness, purity and truth, than any one else among them.

survive and accumulate for any enduring good, as true Religion remains to keep alive what is best in our race. Upon the wisest view of our life, there is nothing strange in this. Those who concentrate their thoughts upon earthly things more quickly arrive at their results than those who now so much more nobly and happily give due thought to the greater. How plainly Our Lord teaches us this in the saying that 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light'! But what is the ultimate result for both parties, even in this world? The one first lose the best things, and soon, with them, even their poor grasp upon the inferior—while even these arts and elegancies (they are but a part of the good things which God has prepared for them by the vain, selfish toil of the others, as He might by any other means) fall to those who have lost their lives to save them—for 'the meek shall inherit the *earth*.'

So these discoveries also passed over among those who walked with God; or these arts, too, would have been drowned and lost in the torrents which washed out the abominations of their inventors. The history of the musical art, explored with real comprehension of its uses, would show that it belonged from the first to Religion. This part of our nature, uniting, as it does, both the spiritual and physical in a wonderful way, was surely created chiefly for the praise of God. The very earliest mention of it is at the Creation itself, when 'the morning stars sang together.' This is indeed wonderfully poetical, but none the less true in its averment, according to our wisest thought and all history, that the first and highest use of the voice in poetry and music is in acts of religion. Whatever beautiful, moving, and delightful uses it may have for human love, generous patriotism, or mere entertainment, the art never reaches its loftiest flights until it is consecrated to God Himself. Thus while the worldly Jubal first began the contrivance of instruments, which by this time have become such a noble part of music, not only was their religious use soon found *among* the devout, but they came to the help of that 'singing unto God,' which we may believe began with the innocence of Paradise, and passed over into the religion of penitence and faith.

In this period also we find the striking record, 'Then

began men to call upon the name of the Lord (*Jehovah*).<sup>1</sup> According to any of the best interpretations of these somewhat mysterious words, it at least describes religious profession and public worship. It also utterly excludes the notion of some, that this Divine *Name* was unknown before Moses.

But the battle was fast going against Religion among mankind. After the bright star of Enoch set, none like it rose of such individual splendour; nor, on the other hand, did the one devout family multiply into more such. Thus so lowering and despairing became the world (as made for mankind)<sup>1</sup> that 'the whole creation' might have seemed to utter a deeper groan at this its sympathetic degradation, and to cry out 'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth: for the faithful (believing) fail from among the sons of Adam.'<sup>2</sup> And in like proportion, it would seem, grew worse the passionate selfishness, the pride, violence, cruelty, and lewdness of the irreligious, until the righteous judgment of God upon it needs to be expressed in these awful words: 'And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.'<sup>3</sup> Some fearful crisis surely impended. Either the race of man was to be quite blotted out, or deliverance and 'probation' for it under somewhat new conditions must be made.

So to Noah, the great-grandson of Enoch, was now revealed such a 'new departure' of grace and hope for us all. Religion, indeed, had not perished with Enoch, though, in this second period of its history, it rose to its highest single character in him. His son Methuselah, his grandson Lamech, and now his great-grandson Noah (though born long after his translation), had kept fast hold of this truth. Of Noah it is even specially recorded that he 'was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God'—plainly not as this is said of Enoch, for later events disclose great faults in his fine character. Him God informed that He was about to bring a flood of water upon the earth, which would drown all mankind, only saving him and his family, which he

<sup>1</sup> St. Peter (2 Pet. ii. 5) calls it then 'the world of the ungodly.'

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xii. 1. This is only a more exact rendering of the passage.

<sup>3</sup> Any who are disturbed at the complaints some may make at this as 'anthropomorphic' can recur to what has been already said of all such instances on p. 212, etc.

was carefully bringing up in his own piety, and instructing him how to effect this escape from the general destruction.

We may, with due awe and humility, make some conjectures as to why this period from the Fall to the Flood was to be the first part of that great wonder of man's history, by which the disaster of the Fall was to be remedied. It is for all the generations after an example of what man, once disobeying the law of love, must *naturally* become. All the circumstances then went to make this trial complete. Man is at his best individually, in the fresh and healthful completeness of body and mind. The powerful tendency of all wrong-doing, as afterwards so plainly revealed to us in one of the Ten Commandments—'visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children,' etc. (Exod. xx. 5)—had only just begun its degrading process. The world outside of and around him was nearest to its first perfection. All is specially *natural*, and whatever knowledge of God and spiritual things he *can* gain by this 'Nature,' be his capacity that way quick or slow, he can then do better than in any later period.

Nor is he even then left to *feel* his way toward the Great Unseen in any obscurity, by such observation and thought, were that the most natural direction of them, much less to grope after it in stumbling darkness. He *begins* with great knowledge of God, and of his own nature and duty towards Him in all respects, and a recurring seventh day to be hallowed for religion, and as perpetually reminding him of all that truth. What will this favoured servant do with the precious 'talent' thus intrusted to him by his Lord? Not merely *one* such either, great as was its value. For beside that intelligent nature of love in which he had been made 'in the image' of the Supreme Good, and the 'Word of God' given to him in Paradise while innocent, he has also the word of promise to him of restoration after the Fall, the *example* of some of the best of his fellow-men, and some certain words of warning about a future judgment which some of them, as prophets of God, addressed to all their fellow-men.

We know this of Enoch<sup>1</sup> and of Noah. The first of these

<sup>1</sup> As we have seen before, according to the only true and reasonable Christian method, the New Testament best interprets for us the Old; and any

had a prophetic vision of the Judgment which is to close the whole of this life, and allot the eternal future of each soul. We may very reasonably presume that this great event was revealed as a part of the original religion, at least after the Fall. But now in the deepening shadows of general wickedness it was proclaimed anew to all through that great and holy man, 'the seventh from Adam' (St. Jude 14, 15), that the Lord would come with the pomp of vast attendance, 'with ten thousands of His saints, to convince all' who had chosen and persisted in the evil way—'gone in the way of Cain,' as he elsewhere expresses it (ver. 5)—of their evil deeds and evil sayings. For we have here an express mention that those first sinners also added 'hard speeches' about God and His Will to their 'ungodly deeds.'

So also Noah for a long time besought his wicked fellow-men to return into the way of righteousness—'to believe in God, and to serve Him.' And beside the other 'terrors of the Lord' by which he tried to persuade them, he told them of a new danger—that of an instant (that is, in the earlier sense of that word, as *urgent* and then *impending*) purpose of God

supplemental incidents it mentions, which are not found in the older chronicle, are of the highest historical certainty, coming directly from Him to Whom all that past is better known than any memories or monuments of men can show it to us. This has nothing whatever to do with the so-called 'Book of Enoch,' which not only never was received for Holy Scripture in the Church, but, as Mr. Bruce recovered it entire in Abyssinia, is upon its face so merely and weakly human—one of the fantastic inventions of the Jews in that period between the closing of true prophecy and their entire expulsion from Palestine,—that one can but wonder that Christian scholars should ever have believed that St. Jude 'quoted' from it. That his words coincide with one brief passage of this strange writing is no proof of such quotation, unless we first assume that one of the holy Apostles of God, writing by His inspiration, *could* not know the truth he then utters, or find words to express it, unless he took them from a writing of no authority, and of which we have no proof at all that *it* was not written long after the Epistle, and so copied the words from *that*. We who receive that Epistle, with the rest of the New Testament, as 'the Word of God,' cannot without absurdity allow this. We have two other conjectures at our service, either of which accords with that faith: firstly, that this was a part of the genuine tradition from those very days, through Noah and his descendants—which tradition is true, whatever other and false beliefs had gathered around it,—but was now separated from these, and placed here by the perfect inspiration; secondly, that it was then directly revealed to the Apostle Jude. *Both* of these may be true; either, alone, is entirely reasonable; the other notion is not at all so.



to destroy all who persisted in this impiety by a great flood of waters. And we also know how they replied to, and repelled, these most kindly as well as awful warnings. This is implied in Our Lord's Own allusion to 'the days of Noah' (St. Matt. xxiv. 37). But more circumstantially does St. Peter, in three different places (1 Pet. iii. 20, 2 Pet. ii. 5, iii. 3, 4), illustrate the scoffing unbelief which some men were to practise from the Lord's first Advent until His second one, by the like conduct of those first sinners. Such an allusion, I think, is very plain in this great passage: 'Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days (just as there did in the first) scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for *since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth, . . . whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.'

The resemblance is very striking in the appeal from God's Word to the 'Uniformity of Nature.' That also was a time like ours, when no 'signs and wonders' of Religion are recorded (either to restore impaired faith, or, as some would say, to suggest superstition). The simple question then, as now, was, Would they believe what God had revealed in the past, and what He gave warning of as to the future, by some of their fellow-men as His prophets? Thus the history shows us that with these favouring opportunities, so far was it from the fact that truth and good would of themselves from slight beginnings leaven and change to themselves a great mass of evil existing around them, that the exact reverse took place. The evil once entering among men by a single act, proceeds to assimilate all to itself. So, as we now follow this process until Enoch and his house were left alone on the side of the goodness—that indeed rising to such excellence in one man,—yet immediately after this tremendous contrast we see that the one good family does not hold its own against the evil all around it. Noah's sons do not show the firm faith of their father. Even after that most awful warning against evil (and reward of faith in God), which they survived, has passed into history—the

history has no such words of praise for them,—and what followed in a few generations shows what that silence means. It more expressly records the shameful misconduct of one of them, and at the same time discloses a sad weakness even in their father. What, then, might they have done, and what become, to the utter extinction of true Religion, if ‘all things *had* continued *as* from the beginning’!<sup>1</sup>

This history of man, as first most intelligent, innocent, and happy, and then losing this by his own wrong choice, is the only thing that at all accounts for the actual general wretchedness and wickedness of mankind. It does leave the incidents of this in great measure a profound mystery, far beyond our comprehension. But it is thus a reasonable<sup>2</sup> mystery, in perfect keeping with what is most noble and certain in all our other knowledge, whereas all other attempts to explain this by philosophy or mythology are not only in themselves miserable failures to throw any light upon this, but confuse and obscure what we do know otherwise of God by His Own Word and our best thoughts. This account of ‘the origin of evil’ deals with facts, not metaphysics. It has the strength of simple truth, not the feeble struggling of human ambition of thought after what is beyond its capacity. This simplicity is indeed childlike, but it is not at all childish, as are the ‘many

<sup>1</sup> Never were conditions more favourable in the main for Mr. Matthew Arnold’s reasonable religion. There was then the least *Aberglaube* and the most *Zeitgeist* (and therefore ‘Literature’ would have been quite dispensable?). No prodigies, or suggestion of them, interfered with the march of the Cosmos. I have never seen this condition of that time noticed by commentators, though it may have been, and is an implied fact of this history. The translation of Enoch is no exception to this, for it was not an appearance (*phainomenon*), but to the irreligious at most a mere *disappearance*, which they could account for, if they took any notice of it, by ‘natural’ causes, as readily as such men would now. Nor were those prophecies, or those of Noah, miracles to them. They simply disbelieved them, as such men do now the warnings of Religion about a judgment to come. Nor, as much as now, had the inheritance of a hundred generations entwined the inventions of ‘priestcraft’ with the laws, traditions, customs, and early education of all. And in that pleasant part of the world no hard conditions of extreme cold or heat, or any other such difficult struggle for bodily existence, cramped and distorted their spiritual life.

<sup>2</sup> It can be shown that the only alternative of supposing that ultimately, back of all such inquiries by us, there is a reasonable mystery which extends far beyond our comprehension, is that we are naturally *all-knowing*, and our intelligence at least co-extensive with the Divine. But as this is essentially unreasonable, the *reductio ad absurdum* is complete.

inventions' of men when they try to be profound, and are only confused and weak. But it alone can also tell us 'the origin' of *good*, not merely Who is the One Good, and none else, but how man may again become good. In this age of ours, after all the painful ethics which philosophy of every sort has toiled at—from the flood of thin words in the Hindu and Chinese writings, and the few glimpses of truth in all the elegant talk of Plato, down to the very hard and cold atheistic 'data' of Mr. Herbert Spencer,—it has brought forth at last what it fancies a less unsatisfactory account of how we can be good, in the new term, '*Altruism*.'

One must translate this word into English for plain people, and let them know that it is the same as '*Other-ism*,' and means to say that the greatest human goodness consists in acting for the advantage or pleasure of another, instead of ourselves. That is true, if we mean the true *Alter*, or 'other one;' but it is utterly false, as it is usually meant, to apply to our fellow-men. Whatever sentimental prettiness of theory or apparent good effect of practice it might seem to some to have, it must end in either self-deception or hypocrisy, or both. There is only One Person Who can be the supreme Object of the devotion of our lives. The purpose of our whole existence, its true, first, and all-including law, is in those words, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.'

This was a twofold 'probation.' First, of each individual soul. Whatever others might do, would it, by good thought and experience, overpower and banish the evil which by a first evil choice had entered where all before was good—at least hold its own against it?—or, upon the whole, prefer the wrong way to the right, and tend more and more in that direction?

Second, of the race, as a whole. Would all men have a penitent faith in the mercy of God to restore them to His perfect love? or, if not, in what proportion would the good outnumber the evil, and give hope that at last *all* would 'walk with God;' or the opposite of all this?

And here was the result of the trial in both aspects. With *many a one* it went wrong. But this is so included in, and the real greatness of each individual failure is so lost in,

the other aspect of the probation, that this claims all our attention. From the beginning numbers were on the side of irreligion, increasingly so, until the probable issue was the utter extinction of the love of God among men, and thus of mercy from God to them, unless some great change was introduced into the conditions of the trial.

So the Eternal Lord brought that trial to an end. All of mankind but the one family in which piety still survived perished by the great flood, about 1600 years after the Creation.<sup>1</sup>

I would here repeat (see p. 90, etc.) most earnestly the qualification of reverence and humility in all such conjectures as to why, in the grace of God to mankind, they passed through this stage of their religious history just described. Fair as I think the inferences drawn by me as to this from the facts, I am very far from placing them for certainty of truth with those *facts*, as we have them by the Word of God. The disclosures of the better life may show us all, that we misunderstood the processes of that great Providence; or some of my fellow-men may more wisely infer these, to my own, as well as others' better comprehension of them; or they may be what is never to be known by us.

One thing, however, we do know now, and will for ever—that in all this He has been, is, and will be for evermore, most glorious and gracious. Nor can we mistake one purpose that He has for us in this history, to teach us all a most loving and confiding humility toward Him. This is one of the indispensable conditions of our peace and happi-

<sup>1</sup> It is not at all necessary to the present inquiry to discuss the question whether the Flood prevailed over the whole world, as now known to us. It is enough for us to know that it submerged the entire *οικουμένη*, or inhabited earth, which in all probability was not the tenth part of its present extent.

But for fear that my silence as to this should be misapprehended, I would say that this is a question fairly open to the devout students of God's Word; that even more than one occurrence within the range of human history suggests that vast changes may occur upon the face of our globe within a few days' time; that there are very marked traces of just such changes in the region which beyond doubt was 'the cradle of the human race;' and most of all that, in any conflict of grounds of belief, it is really far more reasonable to believe the Holy Scriptures of God in their more simple and natural sense than any strained construction of them, in order to allow for the physical science of the time—even that which is supposed to be most surely demonstrated.

ness, 'that no flesh should glory in His presence.' He might have done whatever else He pleased. He did this, and that is best. 'For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. *O altitudo!*' (Rom. xi. 32, 33.)

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DISPERSION.

WHEN Noah and his household issued from the Ark upon Ararat, the world was again to be peopled from one family, but under some new conditions. The first of these was that mankind should all have the memory of a great catastrophe, which had been the judgment of God upon all for the general neglect of Religion, devotion merely to earthly desires, and lawless and selfish passions as the result of this. This event would remain to all the later generations as a memory, a tradition, and, at the very least, a very deep impression of the Unseen Power above them. It would remind them that God is awfully displeased with wickedness in men, and that He has the power to punish it in an irresistible and overwhelming way.

But they were not to live in a constant terror (otherwise very likely to prevail), lest this should be repeated upon them. On the contrary, a promise that no such flood should again all but annihilate the race was expressly given them. More than that, a pledge and token of this—to strengthen their trembling faith in this patient goodness of the Holy One, even if the earth should again be almost as much ‘the world of the ungodly’ as before the Flood—was to appear frequently in the sky, when sunshine should pass through rain, and paint a wonderful arch of colour upon the heavens. Here was a new thing established in the ‘order of Nature,’ for such is the plain statement of God’s Word. He who cannot believe this because he fancies that light cannot exist unless composite, and must have always from the beginning exhibited this phenomenon under like conditions, merely befools himself with the very absurd notion that he

understands the Creation better than the Creator Himself. HE may have never before brought about these conditions ; or until then may have made light and water with other incidents. But these 'natural' explanations, though easy enough, are not necessary. One needs only by faith a more profound and true thought of the Eternal One to believe the words simply and without any explanation.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is also now for the first time that we have the gracious assurance of the Supreme Maker and Lord that all things of this world and life shall move on uniformly, so that men may make their studies and provisions with industry and forethought, and accumulate such knowledge for succeeding generations. This is the plain meaning of the record of His words : ' While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease ' (Gen. viii. 22). Upon this purpose of His, and not at all upon any necessity of things, or upon our 'law of thought' that it must be so, do we wisely trust in all our forethought. It has been very well suggested by some profound thinkers that we have no assurance that one phenomenon will follow another in the future merely because it has in the past.

It is to be specially noted that this great promise to mankind follows as a consequence upon the fact that Noah's first act in going forth from the Ark was to 'build an altar,' and make a sacrifice to God of penitence and faith in His mercy to sinners.<sup>2</sup> And this promise also contains those beautiful words of pity, patience, and condescension towards us all as such miserable sinners, if we will but be penitent and humble : ' For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ' (viii. 21). Compare this with what was said but a little before, as the reason why He was about to bring that great judgment upon the world, that 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every

<sup>1</sup> I regret to differ in this with one who is usually so wise and firm for the plain meaning of God's Word as the late Professor Tayler Lewis ; see his note in Lange's Commentary *in loco*. That he should quote the rationalising Rabbi Maimonides as any authority for this seems most strange. See also *The Reign of God*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> This is what 'burnt-offerings' meant, as we know both by that of Abel, and by them as continued afterwards, in the law of Moses.

imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' There is indeed the same inherited perversity which He then beheld. But before, it was the bold contempt of the ungodly for all good that was to be punished; now, it is the trembling frailty of 'whosoever will' trust in His mercy and seek His face, which is to be helped. It is they 'who will make a covenant with Him with sacrifice' with whom He will be very patient and gracious.

To this was also added a blessing of God upon these men and their posterity, of power, plenty, and increase (Gen. ix. 1-7). This is also now established as a 'covenant' (vers. 9-17) between God and mankind, of which the rainbow is declared to be the 'token.' This covenant is a part of the new conditions in which Religion is to be observed by men, this 'everlasting covenant' (ver. 16), of which there is no mention before, except when Noah was told to build the ark, and prepare for this new probation. There is something sublime and mysterious, with a graciousness, like all the Divine, quite beyond our full understanding, in the thought of the Almighty and Holy Lord making a 'covenant' with these fallen creatures. It is all for our comfort and hope.

There was also this other condition of the new period of trial, in His new command as to blood, for better observing the sacredness of human life. Very likely this may have been because murder, as one of the great sins before the Flood, had so often occurred, even before the eyes of Noah's family, that they were less shocked at it than was natural and needful. Now, too (vi. 3), whether or not as a natural result of the enfeebling of all natural powers by our sins, by inheritance through ten generations, or simply God's Will, henceforth human life was to grow rapidly much shorter. Evidently to restore and preserve the proper horror of murder, men were forbidden to eat the blood of beasts, even of those which they were allowed to use for food. And whoever should shed the blood—that is, take the life—of man in murder, human authority must take his life in punishment.<sup>1</sup>

So our race begins again its trial, whether to be wisely religious—to believe in God, with penitent faith in His mercy to sinners, and try to keep His law of love; or no. It is first

<sup>1</sup> This is the very first recognition of such public authority. See *infra*, p. 259, etc.



one family, under the allowed magistracy of him who was the greatest of its members, as well as the revered ancestor of them all. This tended to keep alive the spirit of reverence and obedience belonging to a good home. And it is not to be left unnoticed that, though long before this the passionate Lamech had had his two wives, and the selfish and sensual 'majority' of Enoch's generation had perhaps altogether forsaken the pure idea of marriage that was 'in the beginning,' yet in this new beginning there was no polygamy; Noah and his sons were observing the Divine law that 'they *twain* should be *one*.'

But we have also proof very soon that 'the evil imagination of man's heart,' which needs the patient mercy of God, was in them too. Noah, proceeding to restore the cultivation of useful plants and practical arts, as before the Flood, plants a vineyard, and makes wine from its fruit. This gives us a glimpse of much skill already, both in tillage and in artificial preparations. Very likely this had been abused before the Flood by intoxication and drunkenness. But the very first instance of that noted is of this very wise and devout man Noah. Even *he* did not use the good gifts of God in grateful moderation, but was overcome by drunkenness, and lay upon the earth, in shameful exposure of his person. Seen by one of his sons (and a grandson?) in this condition, this—so far from being a shocking warning to them of the like danger, and an opportunity of dutiful and loving modesty toward one whom they all should have so much revered—is for Ham his son (and perhaps Canaan, *his* son) an occasion of indecent mocking at his grey hairs, and of that most immoral jesting which has always been one of the actual sins against God's law of purity, and the certain sign of a bad heart in this respect. Yet, on the other hand, his two other sons at once show beautiful respect for a father, and a noble, godly purity of soul. Does this indicate that now at last, and for all the future, the religious shall outnumber the others among mankind as two to one? We shall see. One immediate result of the occurrence was a Divine prophecy that the descendants of the low-minded Ham, and especially of his son Canaan, should be degraded below their fellow-men in later ages.

This, however, does not appear at once. It is rather the 'Hamites,' just as with the progeny of Cain, who at first show most ingenuity and power. But in all this first period of, say, 400 years after the Flood, the history is exceedingly brief and scanty. Yet it is exceedingly valuable, for it is the only history whatever which we have of this time. Nothing which is ever brought in competition with it will bear the comparison. That of the Hindus which of late, under the patronage of Prof. Max Müller, is so much pushed upon us, is an utter blank here as to real history. That of the Egyptians has more body as to different facts of various degrees of credibility, yet it is not *history*. It is not a continuous thread of narrative, with an orderly succession of events, or any chronology whatever. It is a great mass of lately deciphered inscriptions and descriptions, which European scholars are trying to arrange into such history, yet so far with little success, as they do not agree among themselves; and later researches may show that none of them are right. Indeed, the greatest reliance so far for such an understanding of them is this very Hebrew chronicle. The same is even more true of the Assyrian remains.<sup>1</sup> Even less truth can be extracted from the supposed Chinese records of this age. Whereas we have here, in the Book of Moses, a continuous relation by successive generations; and in the tenth chapter of Genesis far the most valuable, and even the only, summary of the branching divisions of man by tribal stocks, by whom 'was the whole earth overspread.'

As we now take leave of Noah personally, we should recur to what is said (so briefly, and yet with so much meaning) in that summary of the history of true Religion: 'By faith Noah, by an inspired warning<sup>2</sup> about things not yet seen, with devout prudence, constructed an ark for the salvation of his house, by which he condemned the world (the *Kosmos*), and became the inheritor of the righteousness which is by faith.' How is this belief in God and His Word, and penitent obedience of Him according to this, which is the sub-

<sup>1</sup> Under this I include all the Chaldean and Babylonian antiquities.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 7. In this quotation I venture to translate the original more closely, and yet I think more truly, than either the A.V. or the 'Revision.' Ought the *name* of God ever to be set in His Word where He has not directly placed it?

stance of true religion, to fare in these following generations ? We shall see.

Little is told of this in detail. In fact, about all we have of it is the story of another vast cataclysm in human affairs, which indeed no way affected the physical world, but was like a great earthquake in the midst of human action. The re-peopling of the earth had begun with greater rapidity than ever. It has been unreasonably assumed by some Christian writers, and allowed by others, that this could not have gone on so fast that in, say, 400 years there should be nations and cities on the Nile and the Euphrates, armies and wars. But once dismiss from our minds the mere prejudice—for such it really is—that the mass of mankind were in that beginning what they are now, mere plodders after a bare physical living, of food and shelter, while a few monopolise the real comforts and powers of human life, all alike inheriting a certain exhaustion of vital force through ages of unnatural living ; once remember that all these men and women, just after the Flood, had a nearly equal division of what is provided for human life, and lived close to the primitive ages of bodily force, courage, and will, of which but *traces* are seen now, and that only in a few—and it is all easy enough. Each generation of thirty years may have multiplied tenfold. Why not ? And thus in a hundred years we have them by thousands, and in 400 years, even making great allowance for the lessening of this now by wars and other adversities, by hundreds of millions.

As yet we have no hint of false religion. Very likely its beginnings were astir in the pride and self-will, which began to revolt at authority of God, as well as of parents and patriarchs, and the animal sensuality, which wished to evade the holy laws of self-denying love. If such men did not venture, like those before the Flood, to utterly defy all religion—if that fearful testimony of Divine power was all too fresh in the memories of the older, and in the traditions of the rest, they were already devising to substitute for that truth of God something more akin to their wishes. The spirit of combination was also more alive among men, as was seen in a very striking manner in a demonstration against the Divine displeasure at their growing turbulence

and neglect of true religion, when, as we would say now, 'it was moved and carried'—among the thousands already swarming in the plains of Shinar (Mesopotamia—the between-rivers country)—that they should build a very lofty tower, as a rallying-point for their united force. There may have been in this, as legend has told, so much fear of the mighty power of God, with a lack of faith in His promises not to bring another flood upon them, as to think of having the top of this structure for a refuge against such a destruction. We may rather infer from their expressed purpose—'Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth'—that Noah or some other one of the devout had been inspired to prophesy that God would overthrow their irreligious ambition (perhaps some 'imagination' and contrivances of a new religion, to which they meant to make *all* conform) by scattering them in diverging migration. This was plainly His purpose, and far more for the multiplying and comfort of the race, that they should set out east, west, north, and south, to explore and settle new regions. This was the occasion for the great Divine miracle of that Dispersion.

We may be quite certain that there were still a few who continued faithful in the true Religion. Yet everything indicates that it was 'by a great majority' that, with 'the one language and one speech,' they said one to another, 'Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven.' And then the Divine Voice says:

Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have *imagined* to do. Go to, let *us* go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth,' etc.

I shall no more attempt any apology for this than for any of the previous 'anthropomorphisms.' The power and picturesqueness of these few words (with the Divine irony and the utter failure of human opposition), in which is told what we should now spend pages of feeble abstract terms in a vain attempt to relate, vindicate themselves.

Real faith and reverence will never make the childish mistake of thinking either that God was afraid of being circumvented by His creatures, and therefore made an outcry, and hurried down a stairway into the midst of these formidable adversaries; or that we may find fault with the words in which He so well tells us this great incident. Instead of that, we will be glad and grateful to learn how, beholding with compassion this new presumption of men, the immediate tendency of which would be to cramp and thwart their real development, to 'replenish the earth, and subdue it' with their numbers, as well as with occasions of His spiritual grace to them, He defeated this then by the most effectual means. They ceased at once to have that 'one language.' They could not understand, or make one another understand, what was contrived to be done in finishing 'the tower and city,' or otherwise carrying out the great plan.

Not only is it not the natural meaning of this, as some seem to have imagined it to be, that there was a new language for each person; but a little reflection shows that this is *not* what occurred. That would have been to defeat all use of speech, and in effectual tendency to turn the whole human race into unreasoning brutes. The confounding of their language was as effectual for its purpose by there beginning to be at once several quite different languages. Each family may have had one such to itself. Thus their speech to their immediate associates was as natural as before, and so all the necessities of language for thought and intercourse remained; but the mischievous combination of all mankind was broken up. And for this it will be most reasonable to take the family in a larger sense than that of single households. The whole race was one family (and is still 'of one blood') in origin and sympathy. Tribes and nations have been but multiplying and branching families, the foundation of all social, popular, and public life. This survives in a very plain way even now in the patriarchal tribes of the Orient, the village communities of India, and elsewhere.

Thus it seems natural to suppose that the confusion of tongues first separated the main branches of mankind—that

is, the three great families of Shem's, Ham's, and Japhet's descendants. And while this was the instant and primary shock, with it may have begun a tendency, working slowly but surely, toward more variations in each of these, as they separated into many tribes and diverged further in place. This also corresponds in a very striking way with the actual classification of languages, as they have been a matter of study in our day. It is the only gleam of historical light upon what is otherwise more than a mystery, an utter 'confusion' of thought: how, upon any theory of the independent inventions of languages by many different tribes of men for their necessities of thought, there should be such great diversities—the same instinct or necessity having impelled them alike,—or, on the other hand, how, with this difference, there should be such general marks of unity. But greater still is the wonder that these differences should arrange themselves in three or four groups, exceedingly unlike in structure, and tendencies to further variations, yet having plain marks of an earlier unity—even to certain primary words found substantially in all of them. This was more like those great 'faults,' or utter dislocations of the strata of the older rocks, which Geology has learned to understand by the sudden burstings and upheavals of volcanic action. But who would have ever discovered or even guessed at any such interruption of the slow processes of language growth as we have been able to observe them in our thoughts? So we have the key of this difficulty given to us, with our other greatest knowledge of history as well as of spiritual truth, by the Word of God to men in the story of Babel.

The laborious and ingenious devotees of the new science of 'Comparative Language' should have recognised this great assistance to their work with generous gratitude, not to say as demanded by the simplest justice and love of truth. But, alas! for most of them, with a like perverse self-will, they seem to prefer to this *godly* wisdom building their own Babels of ambition. With some of them, even all their love of facts and of true inference disappears, when these would lead them to do honour to the Holy Scriptures.

As we are now approaching the first traces of merely human history, it is well to observe how these, fairly considered, touch upon what we have seen thus far. Some men in our age think that, without history, they can go much further back in time with the beginning and doings of mankind than we have thus done. And this, if allowed, must not only discredit the account so far traced as to 'the beginning,' but also especially contradict this history of their *religion*. For it supposes human life to be of much earlier date, and also very different every way at first. This must therefore be examined, so as therefore, if true, to modify our results; if untrue, to rid ourselves entirely of such erroneous notions, since they could only confuse the ascertained truth, and mislead us in further research.

The firm, intelligent Christian believer has of course at once a just presumption against the correctness of opinions which are any way not in accord with his faith. The least he should do is to demand of those who maintain such things as demonstrated or even probable truth that they make this good. He is not to be put upon the defensive. He 'knows in Whom (and so in *what*) he has believed.' There are several such supposed late discoveries of the earlier ages of mankind, and which do not at all agree with one another. One such tells of vast successive periods, in which our whole race passed through a 'stone age,' a 'bronze age,' and an 'iron age,' before it reached the historic period in which we have monuments and writings to go by. I have attentively examined the proofs of this, as presented by its advocates, as to the finding of human remains, along with other articles, in certain caves in Europe, in artificial mounds, and in diluvial ground. Plainly enough, there have been such men, with rude stone utensils; others with those of bronze or iron. But there is nothing in it all to show that these men may not have lived long after Adam or Noah, according to the Divine history as we have it.

To insist otherwise is no more reasonable than it would be if, when we had never seen the living Esquimaux, we should find frozen remains of them in their smoky huts, and along with their furs and nets, and then at once conclude that they must be the primitive men of 6000 (or 60,000)

years ago. Or, if two Egyptian corpses are found in a pyramid—the one of a feeble *fellah* of 1885, all of whose surroundings denoted ignorance and poverty; the other of a Pharaoh of the days of Solomon,—and any one should be sure that the inferior was the far anterior, simply *because* he was the inferior. Evidently that is a question to be settled on other grounds than those. And so I think good sense understands these things by real history, especially that History which has God for its voucher—that these ‘stone-age’ men, etc., are later generations, and *de*-generations, from physical and other causes, after the earth began to be ‘over-spread’ by the swarming tribes. Egypt furnishes us with another illustration of this truth, in that the oldest country of art and of human memorial does not contain a trace of the so-called ‘stone age.’ But our America, youngest in civilisation, may furnish one as forcible, from another direction. I find two sorts of remains of human inhabitation in a certain district of Ohio: one sort is of flint arrow-heads and the rudest utensils, corresponding to these; the other is of weapons and vessels much more like ‘civilisation.’ I infer from this that among the earlier inhabitants—all of whom have entirely disappeared before a European people,—there were successive stages of improvement: first the ruder, and then the other. But some old man who came there into the forest sixty years ago, with his axe upon his shoulder, and has lived there ever since, tells me that the ruder remains are those of a people whom he found there when he built his log-cabin, while the others are of an unknown antiquity. (See also *Recent Origin of Man* by Southall; *Primeval Man*, by the Duke of Argyll, p. 180, etc.)

Another such a theory of prehistoric history is that we can trace the beginnings and doings of mankind far back of any records by studying their languages. That there is much that is ingenious and interesting, and in some respects useful, in such research into the earlier forms of words and the changes of structure, as well of whole sentences as of single names, is true enough. But to make actual history of this is another thing. However we may be at first carried away with the interesting novelty and ‘unexpectedness’ of the thing, and delighted with the freshness and boldness of a



new intellectual diversion which seems to spread before us without a limit, common sense must pause and ask whether it is a safe and reasonable way to truth. And I believe it must fairly answer this, in the main, in the negative.

If we want an illustration we have one at hand in that delightful fanatic of Sanscrit literature, Prof. Max Müller, who seems to have quite abandoned himself to the belief that there is not much else worth knowing. To be sure, he once in a while makes a kindly allusion to the classic Greek and Latin. But as for the Holy Scriptures of the Christians, as being to them one Book of God, he never mentions them in any respectful way that I can see, though sometimes, in a sort of compassion for our prejudices of education, making reference to those of the Old Testament as some curious old Hebrew writings. The whole tendency of his studies has been to make him fancy that whatever he can ingeniously extract from Sanscrit words (and another man with his talent could make something entirely different out of some of the same words) is *fact* ('what I call history,' see *India*, etc., Lect. i. p. 44), while the best monuments and records, not excepting this Divine history, can be true only as adjusted to that. Indeed, this history of ours cannot at all be adjusted to his supposed results. It is a question, then, simply as to which is true. And that is plainly decisive against him in a really fair mind—of a Christian at least.

For our present purpose it is enough to say that his deductions and guesses of this kind contradict what we have seen to be the Divine history of the beginning of human language. He assumes, without a particle of proof, that men at first had no thought of God, and no word to represent this; but afterwards coming to have such a belief (or fancy), applied to the new notion some words, as, *e.g.* of 'brightness' or what not, which they had already to represent something physical, which they did know.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yet (*India*, etc., Lect. iii. p. 180), speaking of the 'historical growth of our language,—that is, of our thoughts,' he really admits the great principle that language is essential to thought, which contains the irresistible conclusion (see chap. v. p. 356, etc.) that God, making man in His Own image, to know and love Him, must at the same time have given him language. But we have an admission of this in a higher quarter of that science with which God's Word is no authority, when William von Humboldt says (Lyell quotes and approves it, *Antiquity of*

It seems enough to set aside all such fictitious 'research that we have so far continuous history, that mankind had the knowledge of God and spiritual things from the first; and therefore we have no need whatever for this theorising in order to account for that, of which we have already the certain account by facts. But if this were at all doubtful to a Christian—or even utterly unknown through the Word of God,—these far-fetched inferences from Sanscrit words would leave us in greater difficulties and improbabilities than ever. They cannot be made to fit with the most valuable remains of the earliest human history by traditions or monuments, as could be shown in detail. Nor do they accord with the suggestions of the processes of human thought as we observe them now.

On the other hand, every genuine result of the study of words fits into this true solution by history. The idea of the Divine, especially in its aspects of power and judgment, was still fresh in the minds of all men, even when the great catastrophe of language at Babel took place. So it passed into the new languages, and has never disappeared totally from the speech of any man, so far as, and in proportion as, they have retained their primitive intelligence. Thus, in the *oldest* remains of those languages (as with this very Sanscrit), the ideas of religion, and of all the spiritual, are *least* debased and obscured.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most striking of such *facts*, both as to legends and languages, is in the universal traditions of the Flood. If this stood alone among such facts, it would be the insoluble puzzle of all those who reject the Divine History, because, as they say, it involves so much that is supernatural and mysterious. All the attempts of such writers either to disprove the facts, or to fit them to their notions, are failures.

*Man*, 468): 'Man is only man by means of speech; but in order to invent speech he must be already man.'

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above I am indebted to my friend the Rev. W. R. Churton, M.A. of King's College, Cambridge, for a copy of a sermon preached before members of that University 'in behalf of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa' by Rev. Chauncey Maples, B.A., which contains valuable facts and suggestions as to the African languages—'not the rude and uncultured expressions of thought they are generally thought to be,' but 'with elaborate grammatical structure' and 'enlarged vocabulary,' utterly subversive of the theory of improving evolution of language, and also disclosing a primitive purer religion.

As to these facts, they come to us from all kinds of independent and spontaneous sources. They are self-evidently not the dreams or the fictions of Christian or Jew, to give corroboration to the history in Genesis. Among them are the old fragments of the historian Berosus, and the Chaldee tablets lately found to the same effect; the classic myths of the Greeks; the Gothic stories in the Edda, and the tales in the Persian and even Indian 'sacred' writings. With various considerable differences of incident and of names, these all agree in the main facts, especially that all mankind except one family, having become very corrupt and obnoxious to the Divine displeasure, perished in this catastrophe, the righteous few escaping in a ship or ark constructed for the purpose. But the Chinese traditions on one side—even much more the American on another,—are perhaps still more to the purpose, as showing that this was one event for all our race. Grant that Plato,<sup>1</sup> Lucian<sup>2</sup> and Ovid<sup>3</sup> got some details of their accounts from the history by Moses (though this is by no means certain, especially as to the first named, who refers all to his own people's traditions). But how came the Peruvians, the Mexicans, the Fiji islanders, the Esquimaux<sup>4</sup>—all of these—to have such traditions, which accord even more exactly with the narrative in Genesis?

Those who are unwilling to admit such a demonstration of the truth of the Divine History, just at a point where its opposers have thought themselves most in force, on account of its supernatural 'impossibility,' have tried to escape from it by the suggestion that these were different local floods, which made each a great impression upon its people, and so passed into these various traditions. But it is too plain upon the face of them all that they are substantially one, especially in the point of all mankind being reduced by the event to one family (the Fiji islanders have the precise number of eight persons), from whom all later generations are descended. Common sense therefore judges that such 'explanations' are uncandid and perverse. How much wiser are these words of

<sup>1</sup> *De Leg.* 1. iii., p. 627; *Tim.* 23.

<sup>2</sup> *De Syria Dea*, 882.

<sup>3</sup> *Metam.* i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Franklin, *Journey to Polar Sea*, ii. p. 113. Even the rejectors of this as an universal tradition admit these various local ones.

A. von Humboldt, who certainly had no sort of 'prejudice' in favour of the wonders related in Holy Scripture!—

'Like certain families of the vegetable kingdom, which, notwithstanding the diversity of climate and the influence of heights, retain the impression of a common type, these traditions of nations display everywhere the same physiognomy, and preserve features of resemblance that fill us with astonishment. How many different tongues belonging to branches that appear completely distinct transmit to us the same fact! The bases of the traditions concerning races that are destroyed, and the renewal of nature, scarcely vary, though every nation gives them a local colouring. In the great continents, as in the smallest islands of the Pacific Ocean, it is always on the loftiest and nearest mountain that the remains of the human race have been saved; and this event appears the more recent in proportion as these nations are uncultivated, and as the knowledge they have of their own existence has not a very remote date.'

Equally remarkable is it that many of these traditions are strangely mingled and confused with those of the Creation and the original innocent and happy condition of all mankind (the Chaldean even with the story of Enoch). In some few instances both these are found distinctly apart; in some only one has at all survived. This has seemed to some explorers (Lenormant, etc.) especially true of the Egyptians and other African nations, among whom, while there are clear traces of the history of Adam and his first descendants, and of the first and purest thoughts of Religion, no notice has yet been found of the Flood. This would not in the least affect the true history, as otherwise established; indeed, the wonder is rather that it does so generally survive all the subsequent changes. It may be that the very effective sovereign and priestly power on the Nile early and carefully suppressed all memories of what was so much against the religion it had determined to establish for the common people (making that river a beneficent deity, and of its annual flood the great festival), and the connected events so disgracing their ancestor, Ham.<sup>1</sup> Yet a

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding it seems rather the latest fashion to assume that the first Egyptians were not 'Hamitic,' I think the older view plainly the true one. Dr. Geikie (*Hours with the Bible*, 1. ch. xvi.) adopts this fancy of Eber's, as he

recent explorer has found a very old inscription in Egypt, which seems to record this destruction of all mankind, except a very few, on account of the general corruption—but not by a Flood. That all these traditions of the Pagan world vary so much from the original and from one another, that the names of the persons are different, and that they have many fabulous additions, is just what was to be reasonably expected. This all goes to confirm the genuineness of their origin. We find them all imbedded in false religions, made up of perversions of the truth, and ‘many inventions’ of poets and adroit leaders and law-givers of men. This has taken place under a wide variety of conditions of life, region, climate, and events. Sometimes evidently a special turn was given to this by the masterly ambition, boldness, and talent of a remarkable man; sometimes by the combined force of a priestly or aristocratic order. Nothing was more natural to all this, or more to the hand of the cunning master-workers, than the popular vanity of each race and people, ready to exaggerate numbers and dates, to believe and repeat to their descendants what glorified them above other people.

All this we shall find, in fact, in the earliest traditions of nations. There is only one exception. We have a clear, simple, natural (and yet all the more for this, with much of the supernatural), and modest account of the same things—which does not flatter any men, but altogether glorifies God,—for ages in the keeping of one small people.<sup>1</sup> How can we account for the difference? In only one way, and that sufficiently—in the fact that this is the Word of God to all men.

All the descendants of Noah, like those of Adam, began with the possession of truth in Religion—not only these historical facts of the Creation, Fall, etc., but all that

does all the imaginations of that romantic scholar, as demonstration. Yet on that very page he quotes from Genesis, ‘Mizraim, the name of the second son of Ham,’ as given to Egypt from the first. This notion also contradicts the plain description of Egypt in Holy Scripture as ‘the land of Ham’ (Ps. lxxiii., cv., and cvi.), as well as the judgment of Bunsen and most of the other ‘Egyptologists.’

<sup>1</sup> There is nothing in the special character of this people to account for this, as being free from the vanity and arrogance of all other human nature. The History itself tells us the contrary of that, and their own conduct ever since they have been separated from that History is to the same effect.

spiritual and Divine truth, which was of the chief importance, and which also passed down to their posterity with more or less purity. Evidently it was in substance the knowledge of God as Creator of all things and Judge of all men; of the duty and true nature of man to love Him with all his heart, and his fellow-man as himself—thus of piety, reverence, sacrifice, justice, truth, kindness, and self-denying purity; the facts of the universal ‘Fall’ of man from ‘original righteousness;’ God’s pity and promise of mercy for this, and of each soul’s duty of penitence, prayer, faith in this mercy of God, and an incessant struggle of obedience to His commandments, and self-denying improvement in goodness and reverent worship. And another plain matter of this religious faith was of a judgment, and a life to come after the death of the body—of a spiritual life and world, of holy Angels and evil spirits, of Heaven and Hell.

Thus it is only reasonable to suppose that Noah had preserved, and now transmitted to his sons in substance, that same religious knowledge with which mankind began the actual human life after the Fall. It included the two great commandments of love, the purport of the Ten Commandments, and all the spiritual facts of our nature and destiny necessary to its responsible life.

The great events at Babel have already given us such a glimpse of passionate self-will and worldly pride as may suggest that mankind were already departing from the spirit of the true Religion, and in their dispersions would soon go further and further in divergent substitutes for it. The terrible memory of the Flood seems to have guarded them from the utter *irreligiousness* of that former ‘world of the ungodly.’ It may have also early put them upon devising such public authority as should protect all alike against the violence and fraud of the more aggressive evil-doers. We have thus a very early glimpse of ‘civil society,’ in the consultation to ‘build the tower and city,’ in the power of Nimrod, and in his founding the Babylonian cities. Here, as before noted, it is the ‘Hamite’ who is foremost in mere ‘civilisation.’ And thus, naturally enough, we find the same race early upon the banks of the Nile, pushing their improvements with a fertile contrivance and relentless energy which

could in a few hundred years effect what those who in these 'ends of the world,' comparing it with the slow apathy into which this same people sank for ever after, are disposed to reckon by thousands or tens of thousands of such years.

But we also know that the formation of states and establishing of laws is not the mere contrivance of men, but the 'ordinance of God.' The primary government, which not only in time but also in enduring principle is the foundation of it all—that of the father in his family,—we all see to be by the Will and authority of God. He made us what we are by nature, and in this natural relation of the child's dependence upon and obedience to father and mother. Very plainly also the first more extensive rule grew out of this, as the first patriarchs were long the ancestors of a whole, though very large, family, and so presided over the entire tribe. This also naturally passed into the hereditary rule of the eldest line. Exactly according with this, that sort of public authority still exists in those same lands where the traditions of the kind are least interrupted, and the conditions of life most primitive and simple. But mankind multiplied into nations, and most of these—especially where they were in a compact, settled life—needed stronger government and fixed laws; and so those laws were developed or devised according to various exigencies. Then, too, by degrees the Divine origin of authority and law began to be forgotten, though it was very long before the primitive truth that all right and authority belong with Religion was quite discarded, even though distorted and inverted.

But in the great, perfect light of knowledge in Our Lord, we find again the long-neglected and forgotten truths of our nature and duty brought out in completeness, in order that men may be in every way 'wise unto salvation,' and to all of a good life. So this shines over all the past. It restores and explains the beginnings of History. Bewildered and misled by the false notion that everything human must be referred to human *invention*, ingenious men waste their labour upon false studies, and mislead others. Some things about all these matters were, and still are, left to our mere contrivance—such as many details of order and administration. Even then a modest and grateful wisdom sees that

God is the Giver of it all, by His giving us such powers of invention. 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' Yet whatever is plainly in itself beyond the power of human invention—such as Religion, language, law and order, and the like—we should most gratefully recognise as His direct gift.

Therefore when one of the prophets of God in the New Testament tells us as to government by human law and administration, that it is 'ordained of God,' and that its officer is toward each of us as a citizen, 'the minister of God to thee for good,' we know for certain that He is the real Author of all civil society. And the very instance given—that this is an Epistle of St. Paul to Christians in Rome, giving the commands of God to them (and to us) about their daily duties—is not that of a 'theocracy,' as an exception to general rule, but an extreme case that can cover all the principle—of a Pagan government, which was in some degree hostile to the Gospel, and was soon to become its most cruel persecutor. Therefore all human law is the institution and the agent of God for good to us all, though alas! in fact, not seldom abusing this authority to oppression. Such a Divine thing it must have been, even more evidently in its beginning, and while it was most inspired by the purer thoughts of justice and truth, which are its very purpose.

A like mistake is made when theories are formed, and facts marshalled to support them, as to how men first came to have any thoughts of truth and justice, of property, of family affection, of modesty, and of all the other virtues which are the substance of social order. The simple fact, as we have seen it, is that God gave men these thoughts, as His commands, and as a part of human life from its beginnings, in His love and service. Every 'science of ethics' or 'theory of morals' which undertakes to tell us how mankind gradually elaborated these ideas of right and wrong is therefore a needless and misleading fiction, even from that which is meant to be Christian, and claims to refer itself to God's Word, down to the most atheistic and utterly truthless 'scientific basis of morals.'

All these, and especially the last mentioned, are full of



contradictions of history, as well of the merely human as of this Divine record. We know that nowhere upon earth, in the most remote and savage tribes of men—even those least reflective and inventive,—are they without some traces of these great thoughts. There is no past age of which we have any monuments in which there are not memorials of them—often the more plain and correct the further back we go. This is a suggestion to all candour that the disappearance of these thoughts in any measure from among a people, whether in other respects more cultivated or barbarous, is a proof of degradation from a better original, instead of being the more primitive condition. Just this also we know by the Word of God to be the real solution of all such questions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law*, etc., would be of far more value now, and of far more enduring value, but for the great defect of taking no account of the Divine origin of law, or of the most valuable historical memorials of its beginnings in this Divine History. He, too, seems to have fancied that he could derive it all from Sanscrit study.

Attention to this simple truth would also have saved that author much useless toil in writing, as surely many a reader in wading through, the Rev. S. Baring-Gould's *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, and other such imaginary investigations. This writer is quite intelligible and interesting upon some themes. But if the book in question can be understood by anybody else, it is vastly too profound for my comprehension, and leaves me with the impression of an ambition to *explain*—by a mass of words without any meaning whatever, unless it be a denial of what God has revealed to us in so many words—what is entirely simple and clear to religious faith.

Dr. Geikie, who has done good service, and to whom I myself am indebted for suggestions which escaped me in something of the same line of inquiry, seems to have been much too ready to adopt every new guess that has any plausibility about it, and thus has fallen into some confusion and self-contradictions as to the 'Accadians,' 'Cushites,' 'Hamites,' etc. It is with no small reluctance that I must call attention to errors in a book otherwise of much value. Yet, if not objected to, these things pass into general opinion as admitted orthodox facts.

See also the Appendix, where it is more fully set forth why the author has had to forego his wish to present the simple affirmative truth as to the beginnings of religion:—why he must notice somewhat in detail the misleading errors of some great scholars and authors of our day (Ewald, Stanley, etc. etc.), not merely those whose apparent purpose is to discredit the authority and the general traditional understanding of our Holy Scriptures, but of some who have done partial good service to that truth.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PATRIARCHS AND THEIR AGE.

THE Word of God in the Book of Genesis is still our only real history for some centuries yet. It keeps a long silence after the affair of Babel, for some three hundred years, before we have any distinct and personal narrative, when it begins to tell us of Abraham. Still unlike the confused and incredible myths which precede all other histories, the connection with what was told before and the continuity of record is complete. A precise genealogy leads us down from Noah to this man Abraham, in the tenth generation after. And what a space for mighty changes, in that age of energy and adventure, was there in those 300 years! Within one century after 1492 A.D. that same European people—which had been content for ages to know nothing west of the Atlantic that rolls against their coasts, or even of the far East, except in a dim and fabulous way—had sailed around the world, and knew both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and the ‘new world’ of America between them, almost from pole to pole. Such then was God’s Will, setting in movement men’s restlessness and daring. So when, with all that courage and ambition of human nature in its greatest vigour, men pushed into all lands of the virgin world, they could easily have reached its inhabitable parts the most distant from the region of Ararat, to the farthest islands of the south (even if those lands had then been as widely separated by seas as they now are, which we do not at all know), before Abraham was born. By that time also they might have increased to almost as great numbers as now people the world. However, neither of these conditions is by any means necessary to the history as we now have it. For instance,

the peopling of America and of the islands may have been much later.

How then had fared that greatest knowledge and interest of them all, the very purpose of each soul's existence—the love, knowledge, and service of God during this life, and immortal life and blessedness with Him for ever after? Alas! notwithstanding the lessons of the Flood and of Babel, much as it did for the 1600 years before, at the end of which all were destroyed from the earth but the one devout family. Yet now, as we shall see, the case was not quite so dark and dreadful in blackness of utter irreligion, but in a certain gloom of *false religions* which had overspread the world.

Yet before we look into these, our first attention must be given to the existence and the fortunes of the true Religion still surviving. The great and gracious God now intrusted this specially to one family. But it was not to be, as in either of the former cases, the one first pair and their descendants, left all to themselves with only the traditional truth, nor, as afterwards, one sole family surviving a great judgment upon all 'the ungodly'—the new increase of mankind being all left again, as it were, much to themselves. From henceforth the human race were to be, as to Religion, in two divisions: (1) 'the world' (*κόσμος*) at large, to be as they chose, 'without God' as the One to be loved with faith and penitence; and (2) the 'called out' (*ἐκκλησία* or 'Church'), to whom special communications would be made by Him, to preserve and increase the true knowledge of Him, and give spiritual help to love and serve Him—all looking towards a more glorious and quite complete salvation of all mankind yet to be, in a wonderful and mysterious way, by the birth among this people of a fellow-man, who should nevertheless be enough greater than man to be the Divine Saviour of all.

Not that God would not be still looking with loving pity upon the rest of mankind, just as He beheld our race when it began its new trial after the Flood, and His compassion observed that 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Gen. viii. 21, and see p. 243). We have the same thought (though there, perhaps, by a beautiful defect of translation, as compared with the greater exactness of the A.V.) in Ps. cxlv. 9 of the old Psalter, 'The Lord is loving

unto every man.' And thus one of the greatest prophets of the Gospel said in his early preaching of it, that God was 'no respecter of persons' as to people or race; and that 'in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.' Yet plainly in none of our kind would this be a perfect religion of truth and holiness; and among men of a very depraved and erroneous religion, both in opinion and ritual, the likelihood of any true penitence toward God and trust in His forgiving mercy—which encouraged them in endeavouring to do right according to His holy Will, as they understood it—would be exceedingly small. In the very instance of the kind which St. Peter recognised, it was of one who had come to such a righteous and reverent fear of God, by contact with the 'peculiar people,' the small nation which had been until then the only *ἐκκλησία* among men. For all alike it could only be in the way of great forgiving mercy to very humble and penitent sinners that any men were 'accepted of Him.'

Doubtless His Spirit and Providence was always holding evil in check, and in ways that we cannot comprehend, much less describe, saving every people from the utter loss of Religion and virtue. In true history we can never leave out of account the fact, that, beside the inherited perversity which tended to increase with each generation, and thus, beside the evil in each soul ('the flesh') and evil influence upon one another ('the world'), there was a mighty spiritual and unseen force ('the devil') which, having begun the mischief in Eden, continued to aggravate it by suggestions, that were all the more potent and dangerous because unperceived by the subjects of them as such suggestions from another.

It is thus only grateful and wise in us to see in all events of the world, outside of the chosen people, for the 2500 years from the Flood to the Advent of our Lord—whether by the genius of remarkable men, or by more general causes, which tended to retain primitive truth, or to recall any people from some of their degradations, or to prevent just such a swift and fatal corruption as befel the whole race before—to see in all these the mercy of God by His Son and His Spirit.

But the great salvation in all its mystery was to be preparing now for some two thousand years in a very small part

of the race. Thus by far the most important person at this time was one Abram, a chief of the wandering shepherd people, descendants of Shem, living in the river-country (Mesopotamia) of the Euphrates and Tigris, which, however, was mostly inhabited by the ambitious 'Hamite' people, of whom Nimrod had been the supreme leader and hero. The beginning of this great distinction for Abraham was when (as one of the most high-minded and eloquent of that Patriarch's descendants said in the senate of his people, and just as he was about to be made by their murderous violence the first martyr to true faith in God, after the Passion of Our Lord,—Acts vii. 2, etc.) 'the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.' This migration and exile of Abraham was to be the beginning of the *ἐκκλησία*, by which, first only in one family, the true Religion was to be kept apart, that it might not be debased and lost by society with other men.

When we inquire what gained for Abram the exceeding great honour of being chosen from among other men of his time for this, we find that it was not merely that he still maintained the pure religion in the main—for this was also true of some others. But he was pre-eminent then for *faith in God*. The more we reflect upon this, the more we shall see why such faith is in the New Testament, and especially in the writings of St. Paul, made so much of as a great part of true Religion—the representative, and sometimes, as it were, the all-including substance of it, for which, more strictly speaking, *love* is the one such word. The fall from the original perfect love was ever afterward besetting men with the tendency to 'forget God,' Whom they had not seen, and to make all of themselves and of the visible world. Against this Abram had of all men of his time so far most nobly contended, in humble penitence and trusting love of the Unseen One. So he is often presented to all men afterwards as their example, and, as it were, the '*father*' of all believers after.

And for this he now receives the great reward of being the one first 'called out,' and separated, for his own salvation

(among other things) from the opposite influences, against which even he, like Noah, and much less those to come after him, might not have been able much longer to maintain this faith for himself and all the coming ages of mankind. In this very blessing, glorious as it was, he has another great trial and victory of that faith. For to forsake all and follow such a command of God is what we can none of us do without great faith, and yet what each of us must 'do to be saved.' Of course, even then and with him, in the ultimate true and most glorious mystery, this faith 'is the gift of God,' and all comes back to Him Who is All in All for our perfect love. This view of the calling of Abraham, and of the Israelites being thus the chosen nation afterwards, is very strongly set forth by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans and other writings. It is also one great theme of that Epistle to the Hebrews, in which we find the chief clue to all this history, and there are various allusions to it in other parts of the New Testament. The mass of the Israelites may have always fallen far below it—as they did in Our Lord's day, and as the modern Jews do—in a conceited notion of their natural superiority to the rest of mankind. But not so with any of the prophets of God in the Old Testament. In all of them there is one voice of humility and gratitude to the 'God of all the earth.'

At the beginning of this people's career the great Moses so taught them most distinctly in the Name of God. When they were at last settled in their promised land, the heroic Joshua as a prophet of God, just before he died, reminded them of it. And so the entire succession of prophets taught, until, near the end of the 'goodly fellowship,' Nehemiah repeats it in that sublime prayer in the Temple, which contains one of the most noble summaries of the wonderful history (Neh. ix. 6-8, etc.).

But more especially we now recur to Abraham as the next one of the great worthies of Religion 'by faith,' after Abel, Enoch, and Noah, in that clue of its history given us in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, vers. 8-19. Several other great events of his after-life are there mentioned as instances of this faith, thus giving him twice as much space upon that roll of honour as any other one man, not

excepting Moses ; indeed, nearly half of it is emblazoned with the faith of Abraham. The chief such incident is however the first, as thus stated in language much like that of St. Stephen, quoted before : 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' We can see that again faith had almost perished from the earth, and that the best one out of the few really godly men left was now a childless old man, in danger to his own piety from the evil examples of his neighbours, including some of his own near kinsmen. It was much better for him to go and live among far-off strangers, even though almost all of them were men of the worst kind of false religion, than to spend the rest of his days among the idolatrous Babylonians and his own kinsmen, who were beginning to mingle these rites with the pure traditions of their own line. It is altogether likely that he would never of himself have thought of making this removal, much less could he imagine the great distinction which God was preparing for him and for a posterity that was to be for number 'as the sand upon the sea-shore.' But when God did command and promise, he instantly believed and obeyed. Danger and loneliness were nothing to him compared with the Word and Will of the Almighty God, Whom, and in Whom, he entirely believed, though he had never seen Him. So we have Abraham (which was henceforth to be the form of his name), at the age of seventy-five, newly arrived in the land of Canaan, which he had reached after a migrating caravan-travel of many weeks across the barren country which stretches between Mesopotamia and the narrow strip of fertile land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. He was rich in cattle and sheep, camels and slaves, but, for real society, all around him were utter strangers, except his wife Sarah and a nephew, who, under his patronage, yet as an independent chieftain, with his own family, had alone of his kindred come with him. There was as yet no such appropriation of all the land, that they were not allowed and welcomed by the Canaanites to pitch their tents and pasture their herds where they liked best. It was however necessary for them, and it was entirely according to Abraham's princely

nobleness of character, to be peaceful and friendly with all his neighbours, while he maintained that religious reserve which was his greatest need and duty.

Of the primitive Religion (as thus still maintained, not only by him, but by some others,—though some of them were already mingling with it image-worship and other superstitions) we may form a fair conjecture. They still remembered, and taught their children after them, that there was One Only True, Unseen, Eternal, and Almighty God, ‘Maker of all things, Judge of all men,’ Who must be worshipped in spirit, and never by any visible object or image as representing Him; that His first and great commandment to men, and so their first duty, was to love Him with all their hearts; and next to this to love all their fellow-men in unselfish justice and truth; to deny all impure passions, and not only to venerate marriage, but to preserve it as the sacred union for life of one man and one woman; to keep holy each seventh day, as God had sanctified it at the Creation;<sup>1</sup> to repent of sins, and strive by continual self-denial and humility, trusting in the forgiving mercy of God, to regain that innocence lost by the first of our race for them all; to offer sacrifices to God—not only gifts of love for His continual worship, but also sacrifices of atonement, as a figure of the great salvation of God yet to be revealed and completed; of a judgment of all men, when those who have thus walked with God while they lived in this world will have a spiritual life of purity and happiness for ever. Less than this we can hardly suppose to have remained from the first pure truth among the true worshippers now. We shall have occasion to observe in the subsequent history elsewhere, and even long after

<sup>1</sup> There is no mention of this in the very brief chronicle of the Patriarchs. Yet I have no hesitation whatever in stating it as one of the probable usages of those who kept up the other pure traditions. It would, on the other hand, be extremely unlikely that something so definite, so closely linked to their actual religious thoughts and usages, should have by this time utterly fallen out of their practice and memory. And when we find it, in fact, mentioned as a well-known thing among the Israelites just after they had come out of Egypt (Exod. xvi. 22, etc.), before the giving of the Ten Commandments; and its very formula in the Fourth Commandment being ‘Remember,’ etc., it seems quite unreasonable to give any great weight to the mere negative argument that it is not told of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. (See *supra*, p. 225, etc.)



this, traces of this truth, sometimes in quite unexpected places, and very notably in the true thoughts which gleamed in the midst of the darkness of Pagan error.

But it is important to note here particularly the instances already alluded to, of true Religion among other men in the very days of Abraham. There is nothing at all strange in this, nor in itself improbable. On the contrary, if there were no surviving proofs of it, nothing short of a distinct statement in this history that Abraham was the only man of his time with whom any of the primitive and true religion remained would at all justify what seems to be in effect the general belief—or, I should rather say, impression—now, among men of all sorts of religious opinions, that this great man was alone in the world in faith in the One Unseen and True God. No such statement whatever have we in this history. On the other hand, while the strange and terrible fact is plain, that most men of that age had false religions of various kinds, it would still be highly probable that in some families, and even considerable tribes, the superstitions and guilty fictions of this kind had not yet so far advanced as to quite expel the older and purer belief, or utterly to displace the practices of worship which belonged to it, and the sentiments of spiritual faith, reverence, penitence, and holy self-denying virtue in accord with it.

This was so of the brothers of Abraham and their families, even after they remained behind him in their fatherland. It is most distinctly implied in the beautiful story of Rebekah's betrothal, her father and brother answering to the statement by Abraham's messenger of his master's anxiety to get a wife for his son who had not been brought up in the false religion of the Canaanites around, 'The thing proceedeth from *the Lord (Jehovah)*,' etc. (Gen. xxiv. 50, etc.), and in all else said at the time. It is also as distinctly implied in the adventures of Jacob with this same Laban two generations later (chaps. xxix., xxx.). It is true that Laban on the last occasion mingles some of the idolater's false religion with what he does—and perhaps this had then become the main thing with him and his,—as doubtless it so became entirely in after genera-

tions. But that also exactly agrees with the influences of the time. We also know from the remarkable words of Joshua (as a prophet of God long after, Josh. xxiv. 2) that the whole of that family were *becoming* infected with idolatry before Abram's migration, though still, as we see, not having lost the primitive truth in the main.

Even in Canaan we find a few such instances of more or less of the true Religion still observed. The most remarkable is that of the chief and patriarch of a place called Salem, who was not only a most religious ruler, but a priest of the One True God. Abraham himself so recognised him in the most solemn manner, giving him tithes, or a tenth part, of his gains in the great victory over the Assyrian chiefs. This also shows to us most distinctly that it was a part of the primitive traditional Religion to have priests, or certain persons—the most renowned and honoured among them (often, as in this case, the highest officer of civil authority)—as ministers of Religion, who offered the sacrifices of the people to God, and pronounced His benediction upon the worshippers.

In Persia also, to judge fairly from the fact that in later ages the religion of that people seems to have gone much less far in the direction of superstition and the belief of many gods than that of other Pagans, the old truth was still, in some measure, maintained among many of this and of some later generations. From various historical traces we may conjecture the same of some parts of Arabia. Of this, however, we have also a wonderful monument in the Book of Job. As a matter of 'criticism,' there is a great difference of opinion among modern writers as to *when* the book was written, and by *whom*; and as to whether Job himself is a historical character, and, if so, when he lived. For my own part, after carefully and very patiently considering what has been said on all sides of these questions—and especially endeavouring to read the book itself in its own light and separated as far as I could from any predetermined judgment,—I have no doubt whatever of the extreme antiquity of the writing, nor of the incidents considered historically. I am astonished that even in this age, when so many acute men without hesitation set aside all historical evidence for conclusions which they draw contrary to this from the style,

diction, and contents of writings, there should be any such who think that this book was composed in the later age of Jewish literature, say, of Nehemiah or Ezra, or even as late as that of Solomon. It would hardly be too much to say that the style both of words and thought is so different that the former theory is impossible, and the latter most improbable. It is much as if some one were to insist now that the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer were written by Sir Walter Scott, or at least in the days of Pope. To take the less improbable of these two theories, there is as great a contrast between the Book of Job and those of the Song of Songs or of Ecclesiastes, as between the *Prior's Tale* and the *Essay on Man*. In fact, the antique and very profound simplicity of the book is so peculiarly its own that a successful imitation of it (in Mr. Pope's ingenious style of such things) in the days of Nehemiah or Solomon would not only imply having the original already before the imitator to copy, but would even then baffle him. Divine inspiration would of course be superior to all such difficulties. But I have never seen this suggested for a fabulous story, or to help impose upon men a pretended antiquity.

As soon, however, as we recognise the very archaic and patriarchal simplicity of this story and these sayings of an Arabian chief, who had received from his forefathers, and still held in purity, the primitive knowledge of God, and whom He inspires thus to write a part of His Word, all is in beautiful consistency. That the book is so profound in thought and majestic in imagery is only a difficulty for this belief so long as we blind ourselves with the false and gratuitous notion that the men of that time were stupid brutes, and that even the inspiration of God could not raise them from their low and feeble thoughts to such intelligence as some of us have ascended to a thousand years or more after. Dismissing this false assumption, we can best understand Job as a man much like Abraham, and of about his epoch. [The utter absence of allusion to circumcision is not only fatal to the notion of late authorship, but quite decisive as to its root not originating with descendants of Abraham.] As such, he has the most pure and noble ideas of the One Only and Eternal God, of our human littleness, dependence, and guiltiness before Him ;

and of His according pity and forgiveness to us, as we believe and obey Him. He offers sacrifices, and makes prayers, but regards any sort of worship (notably such as some then addressed to the sun or stars), except to the One Unseen Lord, as a great sin. He submits with deep humility to all troubles that befall him, as a part of the righteous Will of God. He believes that to serve God consists, beside reverence and worship, chiefly in all just and pure and kindly life now, and he looks forward to some great mystery of the salvation of men yet to be revealed, and to a beautiful and blessed life for each of us after we die here, and our bodies perish with decay. Nothing can be more valuable to us for information as to the earliest religion. But the book is also a treasury of great and holy thoughts, which have never been equalled since by the most ingenious and poetic writers of our race.<sup>1</sup>

There is however nothing in all this which requires us to suppose that the primitive truth was still kept by all, or by any, of these men, with the proportion and the clearness with which it was made known at the beginning. On the contrary, everything (including our own consciousness now of our inadequate thoughts of this truth, as we Christians have it in such glory of clearness and enlargement) suggests the contrary. The Word of God, known to them, whether in memory or writing, and as in the latter form it has come down to us from them, was pure and certain. But their attention to it and thoughts about it very likely, were somewhat defective—to some of them in one way ; to others in another.<sup>2</sup> As it

<sup>1</sup> It is not *necessary* to this to suppose that the Book of Job was written so early. It *may* be as late as Moses, or even later, though its style and contents agree best with an earlier date yet. To merely *assume* that the art of writing was not known so soon would indeed settle this question adversely and at once. But that is a mere assumption—a *petitio principii*,—for the probable early writing of this book is one of the facts from which to reasonably conclude that writing was very early known. Another such fact, which cannot properly be overlooked, is the Egyptian remains (and probably some Assyrian), from before the days of Abraham. But this question will be more fully considered hereafter.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike us, they had no authorised ‘ witness and keeper ’ of that Word ; and perhaps besides, as a greater difference yet, because ‘ the Holy Ghost was not yet given,’ though He may have even then blessed *all* mankind with spiritual influences of an inferior order ; and for the chosen few, not only ‘ spake by the prophets,’ but also gave the words more spiritual power than they could have had in mere human thought.

now came anew and personally to Abraham, it does not appear to have added any new knowledge of God Himself and of all men's duty to Him. It strengthens his old faith and encourages this by promises of glorious personal distinction of him and his, in the future mystery of the Salvation of all men. I know of nothing in Holy Scripture which is against this probable view of the partial decline, and of the imperfection, of religious thought in the true worshippers,—as one part of the deep mystery of Providence before the coming of Our Lord. On the contrary, the whole tenor of the history, as a lesson of humility and penitence to all men, is to this effect. And there are some not obscure notices of this in terms : as *e.g.*—Our Lord's saying of the Mosaic law of divorce and of the permission of polygamy—'From the beginning it was not so' (St. Matt. xix. 8). This very instance shows that even Abraham did not understand one of the greatest commands of God and duties of man, as well as Adam. He begins his life and follows it to a great age with the one 'wife of his youth' according to the purest tradition. But afterwards—and long after his 'call'—he slips into the other practice without any apparent consciousness of wrong-doing, or any Divine rebuke noted.

The observance of the holy Seventh day may have been somewhat neglected among the best of those men of true religion : the same process having begun with them which had gone among other families and tribes to the length of utter perversion of its true purpose, as among the Chaldeans, or utter loss of the tradition, as among the Egyptians and all the tribes that had wandered furthest from the primeval home.

The thought of the Great Judgment and of the Future Life, may have also been suffering like neglect among them all, by which their faith in the Unseen future was growing dull and even their religious thought limited much to the present life. We shall have quite plain proofs of this in the Divine history of the people of Israel from their very Exodus to the Coming of Him Who again, more clearly than ever before and with a new and mighty demonstration, 'brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.' For in all that history of near 1500 years there is nothing like as much of the expression of this truth by devout men as we would

otherwise expect. Nor is there any such expression by Abraham and those who came immediately after him recorded in the history. Yet, as we shall have occasion to see hereafter, this does not at all prove that they had no idea of human life but the present,—no knowledge of that great part of religious truth. On the contrary, as to all the true worshippers from the Creation down to Abraham himself,—the men of ‘faith,’—and for him as the special instance, we know by this yet greater history of them in the New Testament, that they did ‘desire a better country, even an heavenly.’<sup>1</sup> (See also Our Lord’s exposition of ‘I am the God of Abraham, etc.,’ St. Matt. xxii. 25.) Yet even so spiritual and profound an expositor as Ebrard turns aside from language as plain as this, to find another meaning which will accord more with modern notions of the early religion. Those who entangle themselves in the supposition of the different parts of Holy Scripture and their historical succession, implying a continually *increasing* light of religious truth among men from Adam to the Advent, *make* difficulties for our faith instead of lessening them. Such writers as Kuenen, Robertson Smith, etc., take advantage of this to start puzzles about the history of Israel, etc., that they may solve them by undermining and *dissolving* all that history.

I have noted (p. 203, etc.), in treating of the religion of the first man, that even one of the able writers in *Modern Scepticism* has felt himself forced to construct an account of early Religion, altogether different from this which we have seen to be naturally drawn from the Book of Genesis, read by the light of the Gospel. And when he proceeds to carry this through the ages succeeding, and then to suppose a ‘further revelation of the being and character of God’ to Abraham, it is necessary, at the risk of some repetition, to examine the whole theory anew, and point out what has probably suggested it. Whence then came this suggestion? Certainly not from the account of ‘the elders’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Read the whole Essay on ‘Gradual Development,’ and then the eleventh chapter of the Epistle,—and how utterly opposite to one another! Nor is it what any one reading the earlier chronicle at first, and without

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 16.

prepossessions, would ever find there. In no former age, certainly by no Christian writers, was this thought of. It has been read into the history by those who, drifting with a certain current of thought in our age, found some such adjustment of the history necessary, unless they would get out of and even oppose that current, as they are, for whatever reason, disinclined to do.

Thus, as already quoted in part on p. 205 (*Mod. Scept.* p. 238): 'There is some temptation to imagine Adam and Eve as being in the possession of more knowledge than Scripture attributes to them. Scripture in reality attributes no knowledge to them, but rather represents the Tree of Knowledge as having been the cause of their fall. Philosophically speaking, we may describe the condition of things which existed in Eden as being the dawn of man's religious consciousness; he has no responsibility and no sin, but a law is imposed upon him, and thus comes responsibility, and thus by the breach of law comes sin; man "was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived" and man "died."'

This is in effect the theory, as before examined, of innocent man made 'in the image of God,' being a huge infant. It denies that even then he knew God at all as what He is—Great, Glorious, Almighty and Eternal; Maker and Judge: Beginning and End of all, as LOVE; that man knew anything of 'the First and Great Commandment,' and of the Second which 'is like unto it,' or of his own dignity and immortality. To sin against God was then his first necessary step to any such illumination; if he had remained innocent he would have remained in more than childish ignorance. This reverses St. Paul's account of the process that, *when they knew God* they glorified Him not as God, etc., and their foolish heart was *darkened*. It sets the transgression before the knowledge, and as the only possible initiation into it. Even some words of this very St. Paul (Rom. vii. 9) are quoted as authority for the notion. But just what St. Paul said would not have been quite so much to the writer's purpose as is virtually admitted by the critical word 'man' being not within the quotation marks. For *what* was this word substituted? Let us see. '*I* was alive, etc., *I* died.' Most cer-

tainly the writer was not speaking of the first man in his innocence as such, or at all. It was *his own* experience as representing the individual experience of each one of us, in the *changed* nature since the Fall, whatever special theological interpretation we may make of that.<sup>1</sup> But can it mean that to be 'alive without the law,' in the sense of having been just made 'in the image of God,' and having never departed from perfect obedience of love for Him is, to have 'no knowledge' of Him whatever?

The same writer also just afterwards calls this 'the primitive revelation.' A revelation, *how?* and *of what?*—if 'Scripture attributes *no knowledge* to them, but rather represents the Tree of Knowledge as being the cause of their fall'? Then this 'revelation' was no knowledge of *good*, or of *God*, but only of evil. And so he goes on to say: 'I do not think it can be said that the being and character of God are any further revealed till the time of Abraham.' What then of the great mystery of grace in those words spoken to the Enemy, in the hearing of man: 'It shall bruise thy head'? What of the 'faith' of 'righteous Abel,' of the glorified Enoch, and of Noah? of the 'revelations' of love and grace to Noah and his family in saving them from the general destruction, and of the tender words of long-suffering to all mankind, 'I will not again curse the ground for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,' etc.

On the contrary, we might rather say that 'the Scripture attributes no knowledge' of God to Abraham (as then specially revealed to him) or which all the 'elders' had not before, and in even greater fulness and clearness than he. He was called out from the rest of mankind in his day, to preserve that waning knowledge from utter perversion if not extinction; and in the still unfathomable mystery of Redemption, as one of the great steps of that progress of ages.

<sup>1</sup> Olshausen *in loco* does notice among the wild guesses of his theological countrymen that '*Usteri* supposes this state to be *like that* of Adam before the Fall, which is surely against the Apostle's meaning, who considers this state of the deadness of sin itself as a *consequence* of the Fall.' Yet I am safe in saying that no approved orthodox commentator ever before found in these words an account of innocent primeval man.



It is with much reluctance that I suggest this correction of a mistaken view on the part of one whose work for the same great and sacred cause of Christian faith is of so much higher authority and value than mine, and to whom I feel grateful for kind personal attentions. But that *truth* in all its completeness should be put above all personal considerations. This precise question is of too much importance to the history of Religion, to allow any such mistake to pass into general opinion for lack of being corrected, no matter how insignificant the corrector may be conscious of being, and all the more for the high authority which inadvertently puts forth the error. That indeed, if not derived from, is in accord with, and will in general opinion be connected with, the false account of Religion of which the famous Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford is the powerful patron. Perhaps it should be reckoned among the proofs of his fascination over many minds much wiser really than his in matters of Religion.

Thus he gives quite a different account of Abraham from what has been presented here. He says that Abraham was the first man who ever had an idea of One Only, Unseen God. And then, seeming himself to be struck with awe at the greatness of such an original thought by any man, the real impossibility of its being the result of human observation and reflection, he gives us a conjecture that it must have been miraculously revealed to him. This itself is an unconscious admission that there is nothing incredible or improbable in the idea that God Himself first makes Himself directly known to man,—nay that any other theory is the improbable and the incredible. But it does not occur to him that the most natural instance of this would be in such a revelation to the first man ; which we have seen to be the fact which solves all the puzzles of History, so far as they are of possible solution.

The theory of Professor Müller is preposterous according to this history of Genesis ; and if this is not history the theory itself has no ground of fact whatever, for all he knows of Abraham he gets from the Genesis. He requires us to draw an arbitrary line across a continuous record, and throw away all that leads up to what he will receive as facts. That

might leave the history less in the way of his favourite notion,—of referring the origin of almost all that is worth knowing to India. It is positive proof that in all the ‘antres vast and deserts idle’ of the Vedas, he has not been able to discover anything out of which even his ingenuity could make an Indian *Abraham*. Upon scrutiny the two cannot be made to agree at all. However, it seems to pacify the Christians in a measure, and it flatters the modern Jews by conceding the origin of some great ideas to ‘Jewish thought,’ of which Abraham is made the initial; but it does not agree with real history or good sense.

It casts aside entirely, and if it prevailed among us would in the end utterly take away, the one clue we have to this maze of all various religious notions, through the midst of which the Divine truth has to make its way among men, for the good of them all alike, displacing the false notions which have mingled with the true for ages among the most of them, and especially in order that the true light of their salvation by the grace of God may shine into all their hearts.

The history itself is simple and natural. Why should not Shem’s son have had much the same religion as his father?—And so his son after him, etc.? In fact, Noah lived nearly until the days of Abraham, and quite probably in that very region of the earliest settlement.<sup>1</sup> In any case, it would be the most unlikely thing that all true Religion had utterly perished by this time, in this most devout and virtuous family line, and which had the prophetic blessing of the patriarch—the remarkable words, ‘Blessed be the Lord God (Jehovah-Elohim) of Shem’ (Gen. ix. 26).

If, however, such a loss of all knowledge of God were expressly related here, that would overcome all the improbability. But, on the contrary, everything in the history

<sup>1</sup> Though Faber and others mention a conjecture of some students of the Chinese annals that he is identical with Foh-hi, and, if so, accompanied the first migration which crossed the mountains of Thibet and began human life in that separated land. This might account for the mysterious silence about his long life after the Flood; and the supposed earlier Chinese history is too mythical to be of much weight in contradiction. Yet none of the later explorers of those remains seems to take any notice of it.

accords with, and implies what is most reasonable otherwise. Evidently it was of one who still believed in and worshipped Him, though in the midst of prevailing and increasing false religion, that we have this record: 'Now the Lord (*Jehovah*) said unto Abraham, Get thee out from thy kindred and from thy country and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee' (Gen. xii. 1).

## CHAPTER XI.

OTHER RELIGIONS. B.C. 2300—1800.

BUT this account of Abraham's religion and that of his family after him, is very far from the history of all Religion in that age. Indeed, if we are to estimate these things by the numbers of adherents then, or even down to our own time, it would be a very small part of it. It is only when we take in the superior elements of truth, and immortality, that this proportion is entirely reversed. In the former view we may speak of 'ten great religions,' or twenty,—of which that which had come down to Abraham from Adam was the least. But nothing which is false is great, unless in mischief to be deplored and remedied. On the other hand, for truth and love's sake, we ought to be profoundly interested in that which was then to almost all mankind in the place of the highest truth, and in understanding, so far as we may, how the substitution came about.

This inquiry is full of difficulties. We have to leave the firm ground of Divine History, upon which true Religion was, so naturally to itself, followed from step to step in the preceding chapters. We have to go out into the 'waste, howling wilderness,' of regions and ages in which, as men made no real record of their false thoughts and doings, so also it was aside from the purpose of God, by record and revelation, to give such an account of the confusions and follies of their 'vain imaginations,' as He has so graciously given of His preservation and consummation of true Religion among us.

Nevertheless, we must use such materials as we have, to get the most probable and reasonable account of how these various religions came to be what they were about this time—

say, 450 years after the Flood ; and after that to gather up the facts and hints, as these emerge from the obscurity, until, some thousand years later, we come upon the ground of actual human history. These results will therefore be, let us frankly anticipate and acknowledge, rather probable conjectures than demonstrated facts. I am well aware that some writers of note,—not even using all the materials we shall have before us,—have published what they claimed to be positive and proved truth as to the beginnings of these religions. But they differ among themselves very much,—which indeed is only another illustration of the doubtfulness of the whole matter. These speculations are passed over for the present, but will all be fully noticed after we have pursued another method,—to more trustworthy results, as I hope. And the causes of these differences and mistakes may also be incidentally disclosed in the course of the inquiry.

It should, however, now be noted and borne in mind as we proceed, that all the materials for this investigation, with one exception, must, in prudent common sense, be taken with much allowance for the way in which they have been transformed by later generations, from vanity or self-interest, from prejudice, or from priest- or state-craft ; by poetic or philosophic imagination ; or by mistakes in confounding and confusing entirely different things. The same causes that now impair the exactness of personal testimony, and require strict rules of evidence, and the lawyer's sifting ingenuity, are even more effective in matters so remote, and as to times of such varying and energetic revolutions. For the moment we begin to look for and use our materials in this inquiry, we have to take the supposed facts at second or third hand, as to the time, or to draw remote inferences from the language or institutions of times long after.

Fortunately the exception before alluded to, in which all can be taken in its immediate sense and widest extent, is a most important one. It is what we can find by way of suggestion and allusion to these religions, in the Divine History of the True in both Old and New Testaments. Thus we have already seen a general tendency in mankind within the first century after the Flood to depart from the spirit of the

true Religion as to humility and reverence—a tendency which had probably already worked some deviations in beliefs and rites. In Abraham's time we have idolatry, or image-worship, already so much developed among most nations, and even invading the families that had held most faithfully to what was pure and spiritual, that in order to make sure of the old truth having some secure refuge and perpetuation on the earth for the ages following, that patriarch was 'called' to go from his own country, and live in a far-off land of strangers.

But there, too, he is almost alone among men of false religion. These were the very 'Canaanites,' who were in some generations after, such a special example of that 'uncleanness' of life (which St. Paul describes as one of the consequences and characteristics of the 'vain imaginations' of false religion) that they were to be exterminated by his descendants upon the express command of God. There are suggestions in the History that already in these days of the Patriarchs the Canaanites had fallen into such disgusting immorality. In fact, in the very time of Abraham and before his eyes, several of these tribes (the 'Cities of the Plain') were made the most signal example of Divine justice upon such sins in all history.

Abraham also goes into Egypt to escape from famine, and lives there for a while. Here we come in contact with the earliest monuments and other hints of merely human history to assist us in this very inquiry. We must not forget that this visit of Abraham is the first really historical notice of Egypt. It is indeed a fair inference from those wonderful remains of pyramids, palaces and temples, and from inscriptions and writings so far as they have been deciphered of late years and can be understood and trusted, that some of these great buildings had been constructed before Abraham's time,—that Egypt had then been for some generations a populous, powerful, and wealthy kingdom. Abraham then must have seen the pyramids with awe, and looked at the palaces, guards and other glories of the Pharaohs with curious interest; but not with any such childish or slavish admiration as would be unworthy of his own simplicity, nobleness and piety. Yet not one word of this does the Genesis tell us. It

is therefore at the best, conjecture, and not history strictly speaking.

Or should we infer from this silence that all this greatness of Egypt was of a later date? That would be as some now reason: that there could have been no holy Seventh day known to mankind before the Exodus, because we are not told that the Patriarchs observed it. The difference of the two cases is, that we are expressly informed of God's establishing the day in the beginning; and we have very good reasons for *supposing* that Egypt was a great country when Abraham went down there.

Yet, naturally enough, neither of these things is mentioned in this very brief record of what passed in two thousand years. It remains still true that the Genesis is History; while the great antiquity of the Egyptian remains, and all which is involved in that, is a matter of inference and conjecture. Nor, on the other hand, does the wealth of Egypt, and the greatness of its monuments in Abraham's day, require so long an earlier history as some insist. We shall have a later occasion to examine the supposed chronologies, derived from the papyri, Manetho, etc. It is enough to say now that these are far too uncertain to decide this question.

And as for a decision of it by an 'impossibility' that population can increase, wealth accumulate, laws and languages be fixed, and buildings reared in less than so many hundreds or even thousands of years, it seems to me that this has been much too hastily assumed by some and conceded by others. It is very easy to *say* so positively; but where is the proof that should command my belief? Is it in the implied comparison with like things as they have proceeded in really historic times? Let us have it then in detail. But even that involves the fallacious assumption that the free vigorous men and women who set out from around Babel to subdue and people the virgin world, unencumbered by the physical, mental, moral and social disorders which have been accumulating upon almost all of our kind by heredity, in increasing ratio for say thirty generations, had to proceed at the dull pace of the later time. It assumes that these fellow-tribesmen of Nimrod had no more original boldness of conception and execution when they came upon

the fertile banks of the Nile, and threw themselves into making this their rich country, than the Egyptians of Herodotus' time, when this strong manhood seemed to be only in a few priests and princes with the Pharaoh at their head, while all the rest had sunk into submissive inferiors of different degrees,—or even than the feeble and timid Copts of our own time.

It is strange that it does not occur, to those who make these assumptions, to trace this process backward, and to see that, just as now Egypt is 'the basest of kingdoms' by a steady degeneracy of its people since at the headwaters of History it 'sat a queen,'—so were its people at first of a proportionate wealth of will and invention.

Even now, with all the prevailing inequality of condition and engrossment of the best things of our life by a few, I know of a people who, having remained barbarians some 2000 years after this wealth and wisdom of Egypt, within 300 years past, after crossing a vast ocean, and entering a savage and silent land,—'replenished and subdued,' peopled and filled with fields and cities, a country fifty times as large as Egypt, and spread over it a population already ten times as great as that ever had,—and is still in the full current of a like increase. Why, then, is it 'impossible' that in those 300 years from when that people left the Plain of Shinar, they should have done all that was done in Egypt before Abraham's coming, even to the building of the pyramids and the great temples, and turning the valley of the Nile into a vast garden?

You will say that the European Americans inherited the sciences and inventions of all the ages before?<sup>1</sup> Yes, and also the many weaknesses and degeneracies which quite balanced all those advantages. They have been ever since replenished and multiplied by the mighty stream of overflowing population from their father-lands. Yes, but this migration across the vast and terrible Atlantic, was far more difficult than the caravan marches from the Euphrates to the Nile,—to say nothing of the deadly, and for a long while very doubtful struggle of the former, with men who were

<sup>1</sup> Yet, in fact, it is these last three or four centuries which have produced most of our present sciences and inventions.



there before them. No! the 'impossibility,' if any, lies in supposing that the first men were brutes, or scarce above that. To me it is a greater 'impossibility' *not* to believe, upon authority of God's Word, that they were in force of will and in vigour of body and mind, the flower of the race, nearest to its greatest glory as 'made in the image of God,' but liable, through irreligion or false religion, to a swift and steady degeneracy in all things, as their generations followed one another.

Our principal interest in the history of the Egyptians, and, indeed, the main importance of it anyway, is in what it tells us of their religion, both for themselves and as regards their influence upon other nations. From what we now know, though our understanding of the Egyptian remains may be greatly increased, and these now fair conclusions from the present knowledge altogether changed, even in our own generation, Abraham saw in that land many great temples. These were dedicated to various 'gods,' and in them very costly and quite splendid ceremonies of religion were celebrated. Other such rites were performed in the palaces, and other public places, and at private houses. Grotesque images of these gods were set up, and the worshippers knelt before them or prostrated themselves, burning incense, chanting praises and adorations, and making prayers for what they desired. Sacrifices were offered to these 'gods' of different domestic animals. But the greatest of these offerings was when a little human child or even a grown person was so immolated. This religion was allowed in Egypt to be the greatest thing which men could do,—the sanction of all laws and authority, necessary to propitiate the displeasure of the 'gods,' and to bring prosperity to each person, and to the whole people. There was a hereditary nobility of priests to preside over the rites and doctrines of the religion, at the head of whom was the absolute monarch, king, or 'Pharaoh.' But this Pharaoh was also, with a strange inconsistency, identified with the chief god, and worshipped as such.

As for the different 'gods,' there was no real order or consistent idea of them. It is even quite doubtful whether they were few or many,—or very many, even to thousands,—whether, for instance, at this very time, all the despicable

animals and odious insects which were certainly, in some early periods of Egyptian history, adored with abject awe by the whole people, were then,—or first when,—so regarded. But there is no question that such an absurd, inconsistent and idolatrous worship of many supposed 'gods,' was the actual religion of all this, the most wealthy, ingenious, and powerful nation upon the earth. So much confusion of thought was there in it, that we cannot now distinguish whether some of the various gods were not merely different names of the same supposed person; as evidently some of these deities were only worshipped in some one city or region, while an hour's walk from there they were not known at all in the actual religion.

The greatest of such contradictions and confusions is, however, yet to be noticed; and the more so, because contrary to the general impression, it has really run through all the many false religions of mankind. It is an idea nowhere, and at no time, quite extinguished among even the most superstitious idolaters, that there is One, Only, Unseen, Divine Person. One might *reason* that it was impossible for any mind to observe sincerely a religion of many gods, and at all allow this thought of the Only God. But the facts are against this reasoning. As for the Egyptians, Herodotus and other Greek visitors of Egypt mention with some surprise that the priests of that country talked of a superior hidden doctrine of One, Only, True God, which they had received by tradition from most remote times. Yet evidently they did not mean by this to imply the falsehood of the popular religion, of which they were the ministers, or that they were insincere in practising its rites. It might be a matter of pride for them to assume that the people at large had no such superior thoughts; yet, as I think we shall yet see, they would have done their countrymen some injustice in the claim. Of course the mass of that people could not (as probably could few of the priests) state this belief in precise terms,—might even have been shocked as at a blasphemy, to hear it presented in opposition to their actual worship.<sup>1</sup> But none the

<sup>1</sup> Just as the Athenian populace were at Socrates' or Plato's theories of the kind; which yet were no more the real religion of the philosophers than theirs:

less it was vaguely in their minds as much as in those who boasted of it as their 'esoteric' belief. It is *somehow or other* the primary and ultimate religious thought of man as such. But it was not in this case joined with love or worship. For all *that* was given to these imaginary persons, or false objects. When we come to examine the religions of Canaan, Chaldea, India and Greece, we shall see this general truth come out yet more clearly. But we may already begin to apprehend the mystery of this contradiction the better by calling to mind St. Paul's solution of it, that 'when *they knew God, they glorified Him not as God,*' but invented imaginary objects for worship.

We must also note that part of the Egyptian religion which is commonly (as we have already seen, in a false and misleading way) distinguished from it as 'virtue,' or 'morals,' or, as Mr. Matthew Arnold would rather say, 'conduct.' It would have been impossible for that religion to have no relation, or even not to have had a most important relation to this. The 'conduct' being simply and essentially one part of our love and obedience of God, we might as well suppose a man's body to have nothing to do with himself. But we should naturally think that in degree as Religion is perverted from its truth, this part of it also would suffer great degradation, not indeed the utter destruction of all sense of right and wrong, much less its utter reversal, but partial strange perversions of it, corresponding to those actual perversions as to the obedience and worship of God.

Thus the thoughts of justice, truth and kindness toward fellow-men; of the family affections and duties; and of public order and authority, were a part of the religion of the Egyptians, and also found expression in their laws and proverbs. But in these, and still more in their actual life, they had already fallen far below the primeval virtue. The brotherhood and equality of all men, which we have already observed as one of the very conditions of their early activity and vigour as a people, had fallen before the selfishness of a mastering few. Law, which God ordains for the welfare of all alike, now made the thousand the mere possession of the

—while both alike often heard, as a matter of course, in the poetry of Euripides or others, and even spoke themselves, of 'God,'—not of '*gods*' or '*a god*.'

one. Marriage had lost the dignity and purity of its 'beginning.' The men were selfish and brutal in this, as they had a chance: the women artful and immodest. The chief wife of a rich man indeed might become quite the equal and associate of her husband; but the others (for polygamy, that departure from the primitive order, which so soon and suddenly invaded all the East, was common in Egypt for those who could afford luxuries) were mere slaves. And so to their husbands were all the single wives of the peasants and slaves. Theft and falsehood were common. Nineteen-twentieths of the people being mere toilers for the rest, with insufficient food or clothes, dirty huts for their homes, and pushed with tasks of labour which they evaded by every sort of craft; while the lords and soldiers,—the Pharaoh being the dreaded chief-taskmaster of all,—spared no threats and cruelties to enforce their will. (See Chabas' *Voyage en Egypte*, I, 19, 136, etc.)

Without real history we have yet real information by the late discoveries of written documents (papyri) and pictures on the walls of pyramids and ruined temples. Yet as these certainly are of uncertain date, however sanguine and positive their enthusiastic students now are of their guesses,—it is matter of conjecture what period of Egyptian history all this represents. If we were sure of the dates given, we might well hesitate to accept them as pure truth, because all good sense says deliberately and regretfully that 'many men are liars.' But we have more than the usual reason for this caution in the case of the Egyptians, from the marks of exaggeration and vanity that appear in all their inscriptions and writings, and from their general low moral tone as to truthfulness and justice.

Among these writings we have two which some scholars even think the most ancient of books, more so than those of Job and Moses. One is called (as translated into English by Rev. Dunbar Heath) *The Proverbs of Aphobis*, which may show us the 'moral' teaching of ancient Egypt; the other the *Book of the Dead* (which also may be found in full in English in Bunsen's *Egypt's Place in History*), which gives us more of the religion in its public ceremonies and its beliefs, but also conveys a most full account of the *theoretic* 'morals'

of the people. For, as its title indicates, it is mostly taken up with an account of what was done with the dead (that is, the rich and noble only?—for who cared to spend time or money on the poor carcass out of which toil and cruelty had at last expelled its wretched life?); especially of a trial to which the deceased person was then subject, to decide what had become of the soul, and therefore what should be done with the body. Here indeed we have a most interesting record of the religious belief (the ‘morals’ being taken simply, as they are essentially, for a part of that) of the ancient Egyptians at some remote period, and whatever be the exact date of this ‘Book,’ telling us much as to the transformation which primitive Religion had very early undergone among them.

And first we note very plainly the survival of the truth of man’s future life and of the judgment to come. No probable or rational account can be given of this but as such an ancient tradition. If there could be a plausible conjecture of the kind, it is utterly gratuitous, when we have the original truth in the primitive Religion. But those who, for whatever reason, choose to discard, or, if that be anything different, to neglect, the older fact, have set themselves to invent such conjectures, and then to persuade themselves that these are wise reasonings and even demonstrations of fact. Whereas fair good sense must see that they have in this only added to the mass of ‘vain imaginations’ by which this very perversion of the first truth came about.

The *Book of the Dead* is generally allowed to give the most full account we have of that ‘wisdom of the Egyptians’ which was the privilege of priests and nobles, and especially of the more eminent of the latter order, in their secret doctrine. It no doubt contained, beside a careful tradition of some of the great primeval truths, many acute reasonings upon abstract themes, such as the Greek philosophers afterwards acknowledged to have found in Egypt:—many correct observations of natural phenomena, of medicine, embalming, architecture and mechanics, as well as details of law and administration. Yet in the book itself we find these things expressed with much tedious excess of words, and still often with great and perhaps purposed obscurity. But beside,

there is also much which is utterly puerile and senseless. The special part as to the dead prescribes a trial which each of them must undergo before certain judges, forty-two in number, who hear testimony as to whether the deceased has been a good man or woman in forty-two different particulars of virtue, and is therefore to be allowed honourable burial of the body, and happiness of the soul in the place of spirits. The idea of goodness of life contained in all this includes many of the truths about our nature, duty and destiny which the gracious God gave to man for his life from the first. But it is very lacking in many others ;—while in their place loaded down with artificial and absurd requirements. Thus to such a man as Abraham it must have been strange indeed for a people, who, for what was only of this world and life, were so ingenious and rich compared with anything he had ever seen before, to have such a religion. This is by no means too severe a statement of what was all which this people had left of the greatest truth, which belongs by sacred right to every soul of our kind. For in this we have the best account of their religion which could be given by the more intelligent. What then must have been the ‘gross darkness’ spiritually of the dwellers in huts, each of whom had the same essential ‘dignity of human nature’ as a priest or Pharaoh?—and the aggregate of them was therefore far more important than that of the luxurious few. It is also reasonable to deduct from the apparent moral value of this trial of the dead man ‘of high standing,’ that even judging by the administration of justice in our day, the man’s family were very seldom mortified by an unfavourable verdict of the forty-two judges upon the forty-two counts.

As already suggested,—whoever now so chooses can discard the simple truth with all its self-evident reasonableness, that the true things in this were relics of the first Word of God to man : the others, men’s own inventions ; and can imagine theories of its being all the creation of the men. But *we* need not wander off in any such gratuitous and misleading adventures. If we employ conjecture reasonably as to *why* they had discarded, or *how* they had inadvertently lost others of the primary truths, while keeping those of the religious requirement of truth, justice, humanity,

and purity, and also of future life and judgment, and of the need of sacrifices to appease the Divine displeasure, and even a vague recognition (in actual contradiction of the practice of their religion) that God is One and Spiritual—the following account is suggested. With the differences of both mental and physical individuality, as well as language, with which the various tribes set out from Babel, the ‘Hamites,’ and especially those of them who went toward the Nile, were most given to material gain and comfort. They were especially what would be called in our day a ‘money-making,’ as well as an ingenious people. When they emerged from the burning deserts and came upon the rich valley of ‘the River,’ they had found what they were in search of. Here was what would reward their boldness of adventure so far, and their toil and care in making the most of fertile land and the exact regularity of seasons. For it did not take them long to discover that this vast and deep flood, rolling from the mysterious depths of a far South land, had its yearly seasons of overflow and subsidence followed by amazing fertility, almost (perhaps for a long time in their experience then, quite) as regular as the sublime march of winter and summer. Winter indeed with its bitter blasts and death-cold snows as around Ararat, was really unknown in this land of the sun, as little as on those Arabian sands just crossed: while, unlike them, the sun was not the fierce life-destroyer, but the life-bestower, as he smiled upon the River’s yearly gift, and made it rich with corn and gay with flowers.

All this both satisfied and aggravated the characteristics of the people. Their chiefs—whether hereditary patriarchs, or men of more than usual force of will and talents, who, as a matter of course, took the lead, though as yet this was by consent of all the free and high-spirited company—were leaders as well of thought as of act. The selfish tendency to ‘forget God’—to substitute some other thought of Him than that truth which would be continually reminding them to live for His love, and that of one another—that tendency was at work in all. But it was guided and shaped by these leaders, as it was firmly *held* upon the helpless multitude in after times, by the small ruling class, when the former had lost all power or even thought of resistance.

They were now so far from the primeval home and in scenes so different, that old associations did not so much recall that truth. Thus, for one thing, the new religion took shape in making of the vast and mysterious Nile a god, to be adored for the greatest benefits:—upon whose favour in rising, and fertilising their fields, each year's hopes depended—to be propitiated lest his wrath at their conscious sins should either withhold the blessed deposit, or, by an unusual flood, turn the desired blessing into destruction. With this last thought concurred to increase their awe the fearful memory of 'the days of Noah.' It is a very ingenious conjecture that the singular absence of any recorded traditions of the Flood in this country is due to the purposed suppression of it by the rulers of Egypt from a very early period; as being against this national religion,—that a great flood of water is the chief divine blessing. And this is corroborated by the late discovery of an inscription in which the primitive tradition of the destruction of almost all mankind for their wickedness, but *not* by a *flood*, is plainly described. (E. Naville, *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.* vol. i. pp. 1-19.)

That the sun, under various names and personifications, is one of the chief 'gods' of old Egypt, may be accounted for in a like manner. That it, with the Nile, was the source of life and wealth, made it the very object which the promoters of false religion,—in whom I do not at all suppose that this was only cold-blooded invention of fictions to impose upon their fellow-men, but that all shared in the need of a religion, and with great confusion of thought and some consciousness of untruth,—in the course of generations of both real superstition and ingenious priest- and king-craft,—used to build up this huge and grotesque temple of their mythology. Thus were brought about the inconsistencies, reduplications, absurdities, and indecencies of those who all came in the end to 'believe a lie' of their own making, and to have this in the place of the light and joy of true Religion.

The worship of the sun, however, is not at all a peculiarity of the Egyptians, but is found in some form or other in almost, if not quite, all the false religions. Our account of this would be very incomplete without noticing another like



quality of them all : that, while religion was from the first (and even in its perversions never quite loses this influence) the great check upon lewdness, still, with a horrible inconsistency, the actual religion of Egyptians, Syrians, Babylonians, Indians, Greeks, and others made this kind of wickedness one of the chief matters of ceremony and we may even say of 'doctrine' (see also *supra*, Chapter I. p. 10). The civilised investigators of this as a part of 'Science' in our day, all recognise the *fact*. But it never seems to occur to them as anything disgusting or strange ; unless as being delightfully ingenious and profound in its inventors :—at least as altogether natural and innocent in the advance of human intelligence. (They may even now in reading this feel the same pity and contempt for one whom it does shock and disgust, as any anatomists have for one who is affected in that way by their dissection of the wonderful network of our nerves). Thus, in their view, it is allied with sun-worship as that represents fertility and growth : it is a profound philosophy as to the male and female principles of life : the 'generating' and the 'receptive.' It means the beautiful, bountiful and benevolent forces of 'Nature'—whatever that may be.

Let us keep in mind that the true Religion (what some of these writers call 'the Hebrew mythology') has not a particle of this 'philosophy ;' but, both by the virgin purity of all its rites and symbols, and by most express commands of the All-seeing God, forbids what the others practised, and does all that is done to keep men from everything of the kind 'both in body and soul.' It is also to be observed, that real History (even when we leave out of view the Divine History and have only what is left in the way of suggestion by later tradition as to those earliest times) says nothing of the kind whatever. This sort of 'philosophy' in India is an after-thought, to allegorise a very immoral and indecent religion, which had been practised for ages before. And so that of the Greeks—much more natural and simple in its first traditions—gathers all this filth of evil passion for centuries, and only after that, finds a Hesiod<sup>1</sup> to inform his country-

<sup>1</sup> But see p. 20, that perhaps the 'Theogony' is of later date than Hesiod, and falsely ascribed to him.

men that it all meant a parable of the forces of Nature. Very long before any of the fictitious philosophy, there were painted on walls in Egypt and on the sides of the rock-temples of Elephanta and Ellorah in India, the words and symbols of a religion which in this way does its best to defile and inflame the souls of all its votaries by filling all memories, from the little child to the maiden, matron and man, with pictures which even most penitent and self-denying virtue could not erase in a lifetime. Will these 'impartial' investigators of 'Comparative Religion' be so good as to tell me why the pious allegorisers chose that sort of symbolism, and why *they* do not themselves adopt, or at least imitate, what they admire?

And so when, in the history before us, we turn to the religions of Canaan and the other Pagan lands, to compare them with that of Egypt and with one another, the first object we see is the flames of Sodom and Gomorrah. The very fact that those who would trace the origins of religions without making any use of that history, are compelled by their theories to suppress these terrible facts, or to treat them as natural and innocent, is of itself proof enough that their method is all wrong. Thus following Abraham back to Canaan and looking at what was around him there, we see that not only 'the cities of the plain' were thus corrupt—doubtless then the most shameless of all—but that the fate which befell the other Canaanites in the days of Joshua was for the like 'abominations.' Those 'doings of the land of Canaan,' as all such vile things are described in the 18th chapter of Leviticus, for which the pure Religion has never a jest or a smile, but always the frown of God upon the offender, yet gracious pity for the real penitent and spiritual grace to help his self-denials—these are actually suggested and promoted by those religions. The cause of this of course is not some profound philosophy of life to be taught to the devout, but the indulgence and thus even the deifying of evil desire. This gives us a glimpse of the meaning of the terrible saying of Moses about this very Canaanite religion:—'They sacrificed unto devils: not unto God' (Deut. xxxii. 17); and that of St. Paul about the 'beautiful' Greek worship, in almost the very same words: 'The things

which the nations<sup>1</sup> sacrifice, they sacrifice unto devils and not unto God' (1 Cor. x. 20). Most certainly, according to this, the Pagan religions were not holy or harmless matters—not at all the Religion which man was made for, and which was made for him.

We have in the later books of the Old Testament various allusions and fragmentary facts as to the deities, and religious rites of Philistines, Amorites, Moabites, Phenicians and others of these various, yet all-resembling peoples of Canaan, which show that in other respects these were as confused, senseless, superstitious and cruel, as those of the Egyptians. Or else perhaps, it should rather be said that the inferior wealth and 'civilisation' of the former people seem to have saved them from being quite so elaborately and systematically absurd as the latter. Image-worship (*idolatry*) was also then common to all these religions, and a chief part of them. It is in fact the particular thing which is used by the Prophets of true Religion, specially to represent the false. Of its probable origin we shall have occasion to inquire later.

It is entirely reasonable in this inquiry to treat these various tribes of Canaan as substantially one nation. The Divine History ascribes to them a common ancestor, that grandson of Noah upon whom the terrible malediction of the patriarch fell. They were thus allied in blood to the Egyptians on one side, and to the Babylonians of Nimrod on the other. But unlike those who grew into compact nations in the fertile valleys of great rivers,—they inhabiting a small, isolated and mountainous country, with only some patches of level land, continued the more primitive life of separate pastoral tribes. A great deal of ingenious pains has been taken by some modern scholars to show that they were of entirely different races, who had strayed together from East, West, North, and South:—that the Philistines were Cretans: the Phenicians a people from the lower Euphrates,

<sup>1</sup> I simply replace here the literal and really only correct word for ἔθνη. It is a great pity that our admirable translation is impaired in so many places in both Testaments by using for this the somewhat unmeaning term 'Gentiles,' thus losing the beautiful and significant antithesis to **ὁ**υ and λαός, as 'the people;' and a 'Revision' which merely repeats this ought not to be received as what we need in this generation.

etc. But the simpler idea is altogether reasonable, and alone historical.<sup>1</sup> The last-mentioned tribe, known first as 'of Tyre and Sidon,' however, very early showed great courage and enterprise,—availed themselves of their place on the Mediterranean coast, and their few harbours, though by no means of the best, to begin what became the greatest commerce in the world. Thus they connected their history with that of the great Mediterranean nations of later times; and so we have many traces of them in Egyptian, Greek, and Roman annals, and fragments of their language, as well as other hints as to their religion. (See Selden, *De Diis Syriis*, etc.)

From these we learn that the religion of the Phenicians was very superstitious and cruel: not made a bit less so than that of the other Canaanites, by the 'humanising influences' of commerce or arts—some of which were carried to earlier and greater perfection by them than by any other ancient people. Human sacrifices were not infrequent. In this evidently they did not differ from their neighbours. Nor did they in the obscenities practised in the very rites of religion, of which we have dreadful proofs; but I know not upon what sufficient evidence some say that the people of the 'cities of the plain' were of the same blood, and so of the same precise religion with them.

On the other hand, we see remains of the true Religion in all these Canaanites. When this Syrian stranger Abraham comes among them, they not only understand his language enough for any communication he needs to make; but his religion, though so unlike theirs in all outward observance, and equally so in spirit, from its grave decency and spiritual simplicity of thought,—while it must have astonished and perplexed them, and even stirred some of the hatred which the superstitious sooner or later feel toward those whose religion implies a contempt for what they venerate,—for some reason does not so affect them at all. On the contrary, they recognise with reverence the God whom he worships; as when Abimelech and Phicol say to him (Gen. xxi. 22.), 'God is with thee in all that thou doest.' An even more striking

<sup>1</sup> Still, there may have been some small mixtures of other races with them—a few Cretan adventurers in Philistia, etc.

instance is his meeting with the holy Melchizedek, king and priest—when even the monarch of Sodom listens with awe to the worship of the One God, and to His blessing upon His servant, and to the oath of the high-minded and heroic saint in the very Name of ‘the Lord’ (Jehovah), that he would have no compensation from these Pagans for what of theirs he had rescued from the invaders.

All this and other like hints of the History show us that here even more than in Egypt, survived the thought of One Only Spiritual and Holy God, Whose Name (Jehovah), of Eternal and All-creating Self-existence, was still understood by them ; and to whom the very few among them like Abraham and Melchizedek, gave the worship which they bestowed upon a crowd of hideous images or base imaginary persons. They recognised Him more readily and spoke of Him (as did Abimelech, etc.) under the other ancient Name of ‘God,’ *the Mighties* (Elohim), which mysterious plural they had debased into a common noun in singular form (*El*), for each of their ‘gods.’ It remained for ages afterwards, in many of the Pagan languages under slight changes of form as the name of some one deity of the many—(with the Phenicians as the chief deity).<sup>1</sup> It seems even in the singular never to have lost the primary meaning among the Pagan Arabs, until taken by Mohammed for the ‘holy name’ in his religion.

The study of these words is indeed of the greatest value and interest to the history of Religion ;—not in the irreligious and unbelieving way which some affect ; but with reverence and faith as the best guides to truth. Another such name is *Baal* or *Bel*, which was, as we have already noticed, an innocent enough word before its application to false gods, and perhaps was then one of the glorious Names of the Holy One. In its meaning of *lord*, or later, with more restriction, as *husband*, it always kept its place in the Hebrew. In some instances (Judg. ix. 23, etc.) our translators (I know not why unless blindly following the *ἀνδρες* of the LXX.) have given it quite another sense, as ‘the men (it should be ‘lords’) of Shechem.’ But even as late as the Prophet Nahum it is used of the One Lord ; ‘Jehovah (the Lord) revengeth and is (baal-hemah) a lord of wrath’ (in A.V. ‘furious,’ Nah. i. 2.).

<sup>1</sup> See Selden, *De Diis Syriis*, tome iii. pp. 336-9, etc.

Here indeed the study of words may help us in the history of Religion. All the facts point to an earlier common faith in the One True God, Maker of all things, Judge of all men. Job expresses this with a sublime purity and loftiness of thought which later philosophy, with all its refinements, falls far below. Abraham holds fast to this truth with a courageous 'faith,' while all around him fall away. Yet it still lingers dimly in the thoughts of all the 'nations' (Gentiles), though they have transferred actual religion to 'other gods.' The very phrase last quoted, and which occurs all through the Divine history as to false religion, upon being carefully scrutinised, means '*after-gods* : ' such as have been invented later, to supplant the primitive and only true Religion.

This proof would be even the stronger, could we believe what has been put forth with confidence by some late writers, and even been taken up by a popular author who has no question of the literal truth of the Genesis :—that Abraham, when he came to Canaan, abandoned his mother-tongue and took up that of the land. The History does not say this or anything of the kind. It is a mere gratuitous assumption for the sake of escaping a supposed difficulty in his understanding what his new neighbours said, and they him in turn. But we have no need to play such tricks with history as that. When a family of other and very different language moves among us, they are not compelled to exchange it for ours. He indeed had a supreme reason for not doing this : in behalf of the following generations as well as his own ; not only as a help to keep from those mixtures which were the very danger to truth which had brought him to this strange land, but because this language of his forefathers contained the precious traditions of that truth in the greatest purity. Language indeed, so far as it is made or modified by men themselves, takes the colour of their usual thoughts, their usages, their institutions. The language of men of false religion would therefore of itself be not so good for the expression and record of that truth. Even if it were, we all know how thought always suffers some loss or change in every transfer of it from the language of its first expression. So that if this man, intrusted with so precious a deposit and

sent to live among strangers, expressly for its preservation from any loss or contamination, had, for any supposed convenience otherwise, given up his own language for that of his superstitious neighbours, it would have been a most unwise and unfortunate step.

On the other hand, the check upon much intercourse which a difference of language is in itself, would have been no small help in that isolation and reserve which was his policy otherwise. Nor was there any such necessity for the change as is implied by Dr. Geikie (*Hours with the Bible*, i. 381), when, adopting this altogether new and odd fancy from Bunsen and some of the other German theorists, he says that 'Abraham's ability to mingle freely with the people around him, seems to imply that on entering Canaan he abandoned his native speech, and adopted theirs, making Hebrew for the first time the speech of his race.' Then, when he went to Egypt, he must have done the like thing for the like reason.

Men of quite different languages even now are able to get enough words in common to make one another understand such simple transactions as he had with the Canaanites. But then, beside this, we must remember that the differences of speech, begun 400 years before that, had not in regions so near to the primeval seat proceeded so far, as in these 4000 years since. That first unity of language, of which, notwithstanding some of our theorists, there are still evident remains, made this so much easier. Of all those 'tongues,' the 'Shemitic,' with which even the 'Hamites' of Western Asia were always in some contact, have remained most unchanged. And to this class belong both the Hebrew and the Arabic. Yet Dr. Geikie is fond of calling Abraham an 'Arab'! And a sister-language of both these (we might almost call the three only dialects of one) is that 'original Aramaic' or Chaldee, to which he tells us the Jews 'went back,' and 'gave up the Hebrew as soon as they were carried off to Babylon, Abraham's early land.'

And other incidental facts of this history do not allow of the notion in question. For how, according to it, could Abraham's grandson (Jacob) 150 years later, go to visit his Syrian kindred, and at once speak the language of that

country? But with me the chief and decisive proof is, that the primitive Word of God containing His Sacred Names and those of His faithful worshippers, has evidently come down to us by careful tradition of speech, in the religious use of the pure Shemitic tongue.

This also naturally introduces us to a question, glanced at before (see p. 158), but the consideration of it then postponed,—and which may now be taken up, viz., Did the original ‘one speech’ of men survive the Confusion of Babel? and if so, where may we most reasonably look for most of its remains now? Some great scholars and ingenious reasoners of a former age<sup>1</sup> took much pains to show that the Hebrew was that very language. They maintained this not only by the natural understanding of the Divine history, suggesting this throughout, but by elaborate arguments to show that everything like true Religion which is found in Pagan writings was got from the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. Later scholarship soon found this position untenable. For it was not difficult to show that doctrines and traditions of the sort were held where and when it was quite unreasonable, if not utterly impossible to think that those writings had come to men’s knowledge. The solution of this was, of course, in those oral traditions from the days of Noah and Adam, which were far earlier than any writings, and descended in some form or other, though usually much impaired, through all the tribes of men. But these later investigators, and especially the very latest, made the equally great, or greater mistake of assuming that such truths and traditions were therefore the original inventions of the various races.

Particularly when they came to compare and analyse various languages, they simply treated with derision the claim of the Hebrew to be the oldest or original language. It was enough for them that it had been found in the bad company of the other opinion just mentioned. But is this ‘scientific’—to use their own favourite term? For my own part, after comparing the old arguments to prove the Hebrew the primitive language of mankind, with the new ones which are employed to glorify the Sanscrit,—I find

<sup>1</sup> Bochart, *Hierozaicon*.—Selden, *De Diis Syriis*, etc., etc. ; Gale, *Court of the Gentiles*, etc.



the latter far more inconsequential, extravagant, and fantastical.

When we are willing to look at the question rationally, perhaps the best statement of the result is (as Professor Tayler Lewis in note to American edition of Lange, Gen. xi.) that, 'the best argument for it (that 'Shemitic was the primitive Noachian speech') is, that there is no good argument to the contrary.' But how *much* that really implies in such a question as this! Certainly there was one such language first. Certainly there were several afterwards. He who will not allow that the latter condition was brought about by anything supernatural, has surely no ground for denying that the earliest language *might* be one of the later ones. And he who accepts the miracle of Babel in all its scope has no reason for denying it either:—the later variety of speech being most likely caused by the addition of some new languages, while the old one also survived. But of these divisions of mankind by speech,—which would we most naturally suppose to retain the primitive, if not the one which best retained the primitive Religion? In that case, Language and Religion would act upon one another incessantly and powerfully in a conservative direction.

The fact that the Hebrew preserved with reverent care those holy Names,—and those of the great patriarchs in the true tradition, would accord only with this. That of Adam, as the common noun for each of our kind, early disappeared from the other languages; yet it has been of late quite distinctly identified in the Chaldean inscriptions. That language was indeed mainly Shemitic, as its strong resemblance to both Hebrew and Arabic shows. In the mixture of the two races in Mesopotamia, it seems to have quite prevailed over the Hamitic. Even in modern times (*e.g.* England, with its German, Celtic, Danish and Norman peoples), we have seen different languages so mingle,—and one survive as the real tongue of the whole people though much tinged with the others. Without doubt this partial mingling of languages by war, commerce, and colonisation, is the solution of many puzzles in which our philologists involve themselves, by insisting that they can always trace descent by speech, just as they could demonstrate that

every Cornish man is of German stock, because he speaks English.

Before we leave this subject of the true suggestions of the History of Religion which may be found in single words, we may observe how *Elohim* continued for a long time a link of History between the true and the false. When a Pagan Shemite heard it used by a worshipper of the One True, he applied it collectively to all the many 'gods' he worshipped. And so in turn, the *Elohim* of the Pagan was in a manner equivalent to 'the Divine' of the true worshipper,—Him Who united in His Sole Self all that was Mighty—all that should be adored and served.<sup>1</sup> Thus by the really (though inconsistently) surviving thought, that the Divine was One (see *supra*, p. 296), the Philistine chiefs and others of the Canaanites understood Abraham when he talked of 'God.' And so even, as the history fairly implies, recognising His other Name of *Jehovah*, did the Pharaoh of his day,—when probably the primitive idea was fresher in all minds in Egypt than later. Certainly that is the natural understanding of the later history, *e.g.*, of the young Joseph's speaking of 'God' to the Egyptians, and their replies to him.

Some writers have drawn a very different conclusion from this : namely, that the thought of many gods came first, and that of one later ; whereupon the old plural was applied by the monotheist to the new idea. But this is not only the reverse of what is usual with words, but it is against the whole tenor of this history. If we search in the book of Moses for its own evident meaning, as merely in any human writing, we shall find *Elohim* always with a singular verb,<sup>2</sup> denoting One Person, except in the few cases in which it is expressly used of false 'gods.' And among the sublime mysteries that must always be 'clouds and darkness round about' human speech when it names the Most High, it may be that the plural word was a suggestion of what was perhaps in a

<sup>1</sup> This is beautifully illustrated in Ps. xcvi. 3 : 'For the Lord is a great God (*El*), and a great King above all gods (*Elohim*).'

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xx. 13 is doubtful as to number ; but if we take the verb as plural, we may understand it naturally enough as Abraham in his fear thus adjusting himself to the usual language of the Pagan Abimelech, who, for all that, saw well enough that Abraham believed and meant only One ; or it denotes more than one revelation of the kind made to him.

measure revealed in the primitive Religion, but lost out of view in what was left of this by the Fall,—then at last fully disclosed by the Gospel: the ‘Holy, Blessed and Glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God.’ Surely we cannot wisely be so positive in denying this as most scholars of our day are. (See also *supra*, p. 136).

Plural forms in many of our present languages have no significance of number whatever: as the plural ‘bellows’ is English for what is the singular ‘sifflet’ in French; or as ‘a means’ to an end, which uneducated people would fancy to be incorrectly spoken.

The main question is, how in this venerable writing, is the ‘Elohim’ from the very first plainly represented to *be* and to *act*? Is this first as various deities: that use being afterward merged in the idea of One Only God: or at least One chief, who is the patron of the family of Abraham, as others are of other tribes and nations? No. The exact reverse of these: namely, that God is One from the beginning, is presented as the only truth: the other idea, as an abominable and corrupting falsehood—the ‘vain imagination’ of men themselves. Some writers have maintained the notion last suggested above, of Jehovah being known merely as the tribal deity of this people—as Baal was of the Phenicians or Dagon of the Philistines—by citing two or three passages of the Old Testament, as showing this to be the thought of Israel and its Prophets. But in doing this, passing over entirely the *many* places which prove the opposite, they surely are not candid. How can we imagine this false notion to be held by any one to whom God has said (and to him as an individual): ‘I am the Almighty God’<sup>1</sup>? (Gen. xviii.) In regard to Israel as a nation, of which we will have better occasion to speak by and by; it may be well enough to say now, that there are scattered all through its history, from the first, sayings like this, in regard to the Pagan worship as quoted

<sup>1</sup> Or can there be any question in what sense he, who had always the traditions of all the Patriarchs, from Adam and Noah in his mind, would understand this? And so we afterwards hear him thus address this ‘Almighty God’—‘Shall not *the Judge of all the earth* do right?’ (Gen. xviii. 25), and name Him ‘Jehovah, the God of Heaven and the God of the Earth’ (xxiv. 3), and ‘the *God of Heaven*, which took me from my father’s house,’ etc. (v. 7), and thus not as the patron-deity of any tribe or nation.

before : ' They sacrificed unto devils, not unto God : ' ' Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands : they have mouths but they speak not,' etc. (plainly meaning this not of the image only, but that what they worshipped, the ' gods ' themselves, had no power or knowledge, Ps. cxv. 4, 5)—of Baal, the chief god of the rich and lettered Phenicians : and when his priests had been calling upon him all day long without any response, this bitter scorn of any belief in his divine power : ' Cry aloud, for he is a god ! ' etc. (1 Kings xviii. 27.)

On the other hand, these are but a few out of a hundred such things addressed to their *Elohim* : ' Thou art great—Thou art God alone ' (Psalm lxxxvi. 10) : ' Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth ' (2 Kings xix. 15). Now with many such sayings, scattered through all their annals long before the Captivity of Babylon, to which period the theorists in question refer the idea of the Unity of God among the Jews, how can any one fairly think that that people regarded ' Jehovah ' as one of many deities, preferring and serving Him, merely because He was their patron, while they allowed the others to be just as real, and entitled to like service by those nations ? The two or three passages they cite, as before alluded to (p. 303), if they were all, might be taken in that sense. But together with the *many* others just noticed, they plainly do *not* mean that. And not one of them belongs to the days of the Patriarchs now before us, but to a later age, in the history of which they will be fully considered.

There were also the false religions of Babylonia and Arabia, of which the Divine History takes some notice in Abraham's own family, and his ' call ' to remove from among them. It is rather from the wonderful Divinely-inspired words of Joshua, five or six hundred years after, and which, if that were mere human history, would be of little force to prove these earlier things, that we do know the fact most plainly, that then these ' fathers served other (after) gods.' By later allusions, and then by definite history, as well as by the Assyrian and Babylonian remains lately discovered, we know, that this was an elaborate system like that of Egypt, of cruel and indecent rites, with, at least in the cities and rich lowlands, costly temples and sacrifices—and of the idols

of many 'gods.' With some difference of names and characters for these deities, and of ceremonies, we may see a very striking likeness in the general religion to that of Egyptians and Canaanites, altogether unaccountable if these were merely the separate inventions of races that had nothing in common.

For one comparison, there was nothing with the Chaldeans to correspond to the Nile as an Egyptian god. Also in their buildings and ceremonies, while there are some striking resemblances, there was much such difference as seems natural in what was elaborated later in detail by nations so far separated, and in different local circumstances. Yet there was in substance the same sun and star worship, with like confusions, inconsistencies, and indecencies.

The place of the Nile god was fully made up by a greater proportion of this astronomical false religion. And then the king- or Pharaoh- worship of the one had its counterpart in more of the deification of heroes or 'mighty men of old,' like Nimrod. Yet there was also some of this in the Egyptian worship. Of this element, more or less confused in most of the false religions with a worship of ancestors, we shall have occasion to speak more fully hereafter.

The Persian tribes farther to the north (and thus nearer to the primitive land of Ararat) seem to have departed less from the earlier truth than their wealthier neighbours. The religions of many 'gods' and of elaborate ceremony did not prevail among them, at least not with those of their tribes which later gave predominant direction to the whole people. By this too they escaped most of the cruel and immoral superstitions of the others. The thought of God as One thus survived among them also, and even much more distinctly than with the others. Yet for all that, if we were to take this for proof that they had preserved the pure true Religion, we should be much mistaken. From the earliest suggestions of their history they are found to have departed from that to set up the notion of *two* 'Supreme Beings'—one very good, the other very evil, between whom their worship was divided, rather more being given to the one (*Ahriman*) whose ill-will, as being the cause of all disaster

and fear, was thus to be propitiated, than to the good (*Ahuri-masda*), to whom thanks and adoration were due. This 'dualism' of God, which would account for all the strange mixture of hope and fear, pain and pleasure, goodness and wickedness that is in the world, by a perpetual conflict of these two deities, is not difficult to understand as a superstitious perversion of the fact that 'sin has entered into the world,' which God made so beautifully good, 'and death by sin,' and of the primeval tradition of the part which Satan bore in this. The perversion of these facts has also always had its place and counterpart in presumptuous and self-confident philosophies which profess to account for the 'origin of evil' otherwise than as God Himself has, in His most gracious salvation of us from all that evil, informed us of this. So the Persian religion, as well as the others, was a 'departing from the living God'—from the life of His love, and the penitence and hope of His salvation. (If not so far gone as to 'many gods,' yet in one aspect further—inasmuch as it distinctly turns towards the *Evil* One for its chief devotions.) When that is so, it matters little whether the objects we worship (or profess to) be a thousand, or two, or *one*, as with the unbelieving Jews, the Moslems, and the so-called 'Deists' of our time.

We have a most curious and interesting book of the old Persian religion, which, however, we cannot use for positive authority as to this period, since the earliest date fairly claimed for it is 1000 years later (after King David's time); and some of the learned doubt whether it should not be put 500 years later yet—say about the age of the captivity of Babylon, and of Confucius and of Buddha. This book is called the *Zend* or *Zend-Avesta*; its author Zerdusht or Zoroaster. It was claimed by these Persians (and is so even to this day by their successors, the Parsees of India) to be a holy and perfect book of true Religion, in a manner corresponding to our Divine Scriptures (as is also claimed of the Hindu Vedas and the Moslem Koran, though the *Zend* may fairly claim in antiquity far to surpass even the former of these). And though it has no such sacred antiquity, much less Divine truth, for our purposes, as the Book of Moses, it is of value as pointing back to

earlier traditions of its people. The Zend itself seems to claim, not so much to be a revelation of new truth, as a faithful record of what had come down from the far past of the history of men and the will of the Divine, and also to guard that truth against neglect and forgetfulness on the part of the true worshippers, and from the encroachments of idolatry.

*This* it forbids and denounces as a great sin. On the other hand, the worship of the sun (and stars), and of fire as representing that, is the substance of its ritual. With this were joined many superstitions and cruelties, and it was indeed a dark and cruel religion in which, instead of that love for and faith in the One Only True, Almighty God which Abraham had, fear of the Great and *Evil* casts a dark shadow over all of life. But then the Zend, beside these false and foolish things, has a great deal which accords in an astonishing way with the history of the Genesis, and with the institutions of Moses. This led some of the scholars of 200 years ago (Hyde, *De Vet. Rel. Pers.*; Prideaux, etc.) to decide that Zerdusht was only a crafty deceiver, who made up his book from fragments of the Old Testament, altered to suit his purpose, and absurd fictions of his own, as Mohammed did his Koran 1000 years later.

But in this they do not seem to have looked enough at *all* the facts for a true judgment. The evidence is rather, and fairly, that in the main he set down what had been transmitted from generation to generation for ages before among his own people,—very likely with some growing incorrectness of detail; that, so far from attempting to invent a new religion, he was trying to save an old one from passing away. As a part of this plan, very likely he may have added some fictions and precepts of his own.<sup>1</sup> The differences and yet resemblances of his record of tradition as to Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, clean and unclean beasts, circumcision, etc., etc., with the Word of God in Genesis, are a very striking proof of the transmission of those facts by tradition through all the tribes of men for ages afterwards.

<sup>1</sup> He would also seem, under the same mistake, to have been the first to attempt a reform of false religion by 'philosophy.' And in this the *Zend-Avesta* fails as signally as all others have. (See *infra*, Ch. XXI.)

If even as to the Persian religion at this time we are, after all, left so much to mere conjecture and inference, this is still more so as to China, India, and the European and other nations yet more distant from the first abode of man. The Chinese early history, of which much was hoped by the first modern scholars who came upon it, turned out upon closer inspection to be of very little value for the first 1000, or perhaps even 2000, years after Abraham. As we trace it back we come upon a period of acknowledged destruction of records and monuments, the lack of which some of their later writers have attempted to supply by fictions. So of the same period in India. That land has absolutely no history before the Christian era.

We have had for a half century now a school of very ingenious and laborious explorers in all these languages, who insist upon being able to restore this loss (or *hiatus*) in History, by examining the older languages, the changes of words, etc. I have no desire to depreciate anything true which can be ascertained in this way, and doubtless something may be. But he who works out unreal and fanciful things from this, and sets them up for History, is not the promoter of truth ; but he *is* so who helps to prevent such things from being received for fact. Nor could we in this inquiry pass these things by without either making use of their supposed results as true, or else showing why they are not adopted, or why any *part* of them is discarded. Their chief advocate again and again speaks of the study of Sanscrit words as the best method we have for the study of all the history of all Religion. (See *India*, etc., pp. 31, 274, etc.) He says that 'the Vedas are the most ancient documents in the history of the human mind,' etc. As these are, by his own account, at the earliest, 500 years later than Abraham—indeed later than Moses,—this involves a flat denial of that Divine History, by the light of which we have now been traversing 2000 years of that past. As the Oxford Professor is allowed to be high authority by almost all Christian as well as other readers, it is a necessary part of the very work before us now to look into the grounds of his assertions and conclusions. If he is right, we are bound to agree to them. If he is wrong, he is very wrong ; and we must not



defer to them at all, but reject them as most serious and mischievous errors. For the present our inquiry is whether they can assist in our further search into the actual religion of the time about 2000 years before Christ.

First, as already seen, it is allowed by their admirers that the Vedas do not date so far back as that period by 500 years. Five hundred years! If I produced no reason for believing something to have occurred in the fourteenth century, in the days of Tamerlane, except a book written last year, I would find no believers. But it is admitted (*India*, etc., p. 224) that the Vedas were not *written* for more than 1000 years *later yet!* We are to believe positively, without proof of it, but only from the reasonings and conjectures of a few scholars, that these sentences—more than twice the quantity of this book of mine—were transmitted by memory alone, without change, from master to scholar for 1000 years! Well, this is not impossible. And in the earliest ages, as we have seen before, the great words of God and the history of the greatest events came down by faithful tradition through many ages. *That* might have been by a miracle of God, which no Christian claims for the Vedas.

But we will accept this as fact. Are they, then, *writings* made about the time of Our Lord's Advent, and preserved safe until now? No; as is admitted (*India*, etc., p. 221), the oldest of them now existing was *written* 1500 years later yet—only some three or four centuries ago. This of itself would not prove them untrue copies of the more ancient original writings. Our oldest MSS. of the Gospel go back four or five times as far; those of Old Testament Hebrew twice as far, and yet we have no doubt of the substantial correctness of that which we now have of 'God's Word Written' for all mankind.

Yet this is the least of the difference. We could not have the strong and certain confidence we do have that these writings which we read in our Holy Book under the names of the Prophets and Apostles were thus genuine, except as they have been kept for us by God, as His Word, in a society of men established by Him to sustain the true Religion, which society has come down from age to age in

unbroken succession of officers and of ceremonies, under His Almighty patronage. There is nothing of that kind about these Vedas. Their own professions of Divine authority are absurdly confused; some important parts of their 'canon' utterly lost. Their European admirers do not pretend for them that they have any such Divine authorship, or any such Divine preservation by human care. They have *no* accompanying and witnessing *history*. India has been through all those ages the place of successive and utterly hostile revolutions, of sweeping and devastating conquests. The Vedas in their contents, unlike our Scriptures, are not at all historical. What a demand it is upon our heedlessness and credulity to place these mere literary remains upon a level with that 'Word of God Written'—nay, to displace *it* for *them* as authority in the History of Religion!

Or is this to be done on account of the 'internal evidence' of their superiority? On the contrary, they are confessed to be 'full of childish, silly—even to our minds monstrous—conceptions' (*India*, etc., p. 118).

Yet, waiving all this, what shall we say when, tracing them back the furthest possible—say to the days of Moses,—they do not yet reach us at the point where we are by 500 years? If it should be said that this is as true of Moses, upon whom we rely, that is an utter mistake. For Moses does give a *history*. He tells *facts*, and in him we can read a record even for these twenty-five centuries before him. But the Vedas give no history. They are poems, in which among much which is very tedious and unmeaning, as well as 'false and silly,' are some flashes of poetic talent; but *not a date, a fact*, or the doings of a single historic man. As for those instructive yet most picturesque life stories of Adam, Noah, or Abraham, or the table of genealogies and races in Genesis, there is nothing like this in them. In Moses we have, upon the lowest view, faithful tradition stories of 2000 years past, which have come down from father to son; or, also with these, fragments of much earlier writing than Moses; or, best and most true of all, unmixed truth from God to mankind, as He inspired some of them to utter and to write it.

And upon what grounds would some who were bred Christians now thrust this History aside for the other writing, such as it is? Because they say that they arrive at more certain facts about Religion by studying the mere words of the Indian writings than by attending to the history in the Hebrew. This may be a very taking idea to us, because it is new and strange. But is it true? Would we rationally act upon it in any other investigation of facts? If we had no clue to the existing things but what we could divine from the form and relations of words in our own and other languages, no history or documents—or only what we had formerly thought such, but had now discovered to be untrustworthy,—then we might make the best of such other materials.

But is that the attitude of us Christians (for it is with such only that I am now conferring; other seekers of truth in these matters I refer to pp. 100, 145, 146, etc.) toward 'the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments'? Do we think that we have found occasion to forsake their solid ground of truth from God to crawl upon the slender wires of these light-hung and far-stretched conjectures?

But even then good sense would teach us to be very wary of positive conclusions from the new data. The process proposed is this. Remarkable resemblances and evident relationship have been discovered between the 'dead language' of ancient India, the Sanscrit, in which these Vedas are written, and the Greek and Latin of 2000 years ago, and also the German and English of to-day. From this it is inferred—and not unreasonably, so far as facts are now before us—that these are all variations of one original common language. To this, by ingenious conjecture (and, let us not forget, only by that) has been given the name of 'Aryan.' Then it is further deduced, with some plausible suggestion from the traditions of the East, as well as from this striking likeness of words and forms of speech, that these peoples all—the Hindus, the Persians, the Greek and Latin tribes of Southern, and the Germans and Goths of Northern, Europe—were of one original 'Aryan' stock; that they went so far apart by early migrations, and were afterward found, with all memory of their common

origin quite lost, but for these wonderful traces of it in their languages, only lately noticed.

Well, let us admit all this as highly probable, as admitted truth, unless or until other facts prove it a mistake. What then? It has nothing to do with the History of Religion. It does not change what we have learned so far of that History. On the contrary, it agrees with that story of the dispersion of mankind from a common centre in Western Asia, which used to be one of the scoffs of the enemies of true Religion. But now even those who do not know all its Divine truth have to resort to this to arrange their theories of race and language,—and then deny it!

These Sanscrit words, allowing for the extreme demand for their transmission by oral tradition for 2000 years, with all that is curious and valuable in them for the history of our language, do not reach back within four centuries of Abraham, or seven of Babel. Many languages have varied as much as all the 'Aryan' ones do now, in far less time than that. How, then, can those words teach us the beginnings and changes of all Religion, while the Divine History cannot be trusted for that?

The supposed process is thus given in one characteristic specimen as to 'the study of the origin of Religion, the entirely new aspect which the old problem of theogony, or the origin or growth of the *devas* or gods, assumes from the light thrown on it by the Veda' (*India*, etc., p. 235). And it is added that 'we can see how the human mind arrives by a perfectly rational process at all its later irrationalities. This is what distinguishes the Vedas from all other sacred books' (p. 236).

'Let us take one of the oldest words for "god" in the Veda, such as *deva*, the Latin *deus*. The dictionaries tell you that *deva* means god and gods, and so no doubt it does. But if we always translated *deva* in the Vedic hymns by *god*, we should not be translating, but completely transforming, the thoughts of the Vedic poets. I do not mean only that our idea of God is totally different from the idea that was intended to be expressed by *deva*; but even the Greek and Roman concept of gods would be totally inadequate to convey the thoughts imbedded in the Vedic *deva*. *Deva*

meant originally "bright," and nothing else.<sup>1</sup> Meaning bright, it was constantly used of the sky, the stars, the sun, the dawn, the day, the springs, the rivers, the earth; and when a poet wished to speak of all these by one and the same term—by what we should call a general term—he called them *Devas*. When that had been done *Deva* did no longer mean "the bright ones," but the name comprehended all the qualities which the sky and the sun and the dawn shared in common, excluding only those which were peculiar to each.

'Here you see how by the simplest process the *Devas*, the bright ones, might become, and did become, the *Devas*, the heavenly, the kind, the powerful, the invisible, the immortal, and, in the end, something very like the  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\iota$  (or *di*) of the Greeks and Romans.

'In this way one Beyond, the Beyond of Nature, was built up in the ancient religion of the Veda, and peopled with *Devas*, and *Asuras*, and *Vasus*, and *Adityas*, all names for the bright, solar, celestial, diurnal, and vernal powers of Nature, without altogether excluding, however, even the dark and unfriendly powers—those of the night, of the dark clouds, or of winter,—capable of mischief, but always destined in the end to succumb to the valour and strength of their bright antagonists.'

But as there are two other 'Beyonds' in the Indian religion, we have next an account of one of these—the worship of ancestors. There was something of this in the Egyptian and other religions, already noticed. We have (*India*, etc., pp. 237-262) that of the Vedas quite in detail, with a theory of its 'natural' origin, of some of its ceremonies (not the *suttee*?) actually observed now, with this final information: 'They alone seem still to impart to their (the Hindus') life on earth a deeper significance and a higher prospect. I could go even further, and express my belief that the absence of such services for the dead, and of ancestral commemorations, is a real loss in our own religion.' Is it not vastly better for us, for 'a deeper significance and

<sup>1</sup> Upon this *assertion* the entire argument hangs. Yet though expressed with such 'jaunty' positiveness, it is a mere assumption, without any proof, and against the strong probability that such words first indicated objects of worship, and by *secondary* use gained other meanings (see p. 180).

a higher prospect,' and would it not be better for them, to know and believe in Him Who *is* 'the Resurrection and the Life' ?

The last of the 'Beyonds' is thus introduced (pp. 262, 263): 'And thus as a thoughtful look on Nature led to the first perception of bright gods, and in the end of a God of light, as love of our parents was transfigured into piety and a belief in immortality, a recognition of the straight lines in the world without and in the world within, was raised into the highest faith, a faith in a law that underlies everything, a law in which we may trust whatever befall, a law which speaks within us with the divine voice of conscience, and tells us "This is *rita*," "This is right," "This is true," whatever the statutes of our ancestors, or even the voices of our bright gods, may say to the contrary.

'These three Beyonds are the three revelations of antiquity ; and it is due almost entirely to the discovery of the Veda that we in this nineteenth century of ours have been allowed to watch again these early phases of thought and religion which had passed away long before the beginnings of other literatures. In the Veda an ancient city has been laid bare before our eyes, which, in the history of all other religions, is filled up with rubbish and built over by new architects.'

The cruel insult to what every Christian holds most dear and sacred which is thus rudely flung in the face of so many of the admirers and flatterers of this writer, while it moves my indignation, will neither irritate me into any injustice toward him, nor terrify me from maintaining that truth by fear of his contempt. But I marvel that any one who is in spirit, as well as in form, 'signed with the sign of the Cross,' can read it unmoved.

I quote this quite at length, and would prefer, if that were possible, to set the whole of it before my readers, that they might have the fairest possible representation of the argument. One effect of such assertions with many Christian readers—the more general one, I suppose,—will be a confusion of thought about this great matter of truth ; and that is no small misfortune itself. With the others, I fear the effect will be the serious impairing of their faith in God's Word as the true authority in all such questions. But we must all

confront it sooner or later. Most distinctly it is a denial of that truth which we have so far followed as to the beginning of Religion. It assumes alone correctly to describe 'the early phases of thought and Religion,' which, 'in the history of all other religions (including, of course, that one which we know has come down to us from God through these six thousand years), is filled up with rubbish.' And it comes to what is really a very ignoble and despairing conclusion—that the History of Religion is one, not of the most glorious truth first given to man complete, then perverted and lost by him, but yet to be restored in greater beauty—but that by this 'we can see how the human mind arrives by a perfectly rational process at all its later irrationalities.'

If we look for what proves all this, the most we can find is a discussion of some Sanscrit words, especially that of *deva*—that inasmuch as this 'meant originally "bright," and nothing else' (if a Christian theologian spoke as peremptorily, and without any reason given, about the meaning of a Hebrew word three or four thousand years ago, his presumption would be severely blamed), therefore man got his first idea of God by noticing all the brightest things and deifying them.

But why should this assertion—for that is all it is—persuade me to abandon a much better account of how Religion begun, which *is* reasonable, and, as I suppose, actually comes from God Himself? My Religion does not at all depend upon this word *deva*, nor upon *Θεός* or *Deus*, or any man's conjecture of their origin, were that conjecture as reasonable as this one is fanciful. I can only know of this word *deva* as, at the utmost, three or four thousand years old. But the true and first Names of God are some six thousand years old. I can readily see how in many nations and their languages the corresponding words were afterwards given to many false deities, or debased to other uses, as when now in English we often hear things carelessly called 'divine' which are not so at all. I can rejoice that later yet the truth was restored among such peoples, and that *Θεός*, *Deus*, and *God* were consecrated to the name of the Only True and Good.

Perhaps something in the nature of a diagram will best illustrate to all our minds the contrast between the two

methods as to a rational probability and a really wise and candid seeking of truth : the one by the Hebrew history and words, as given to us in gracious love by Him Who is the Truth itself ; the other discarding this, and seeking the history of Religion only in our conjectures about Sanscrit words. The upper line represents the period of, say, 6000 years past, as we know it by the former method ; the lower line by the latter ; the breadth of shading being proportioned to the certainty of continuous fact ; the blank spaces indicating the absolute lack of data, and the dotted lines the probable force of conjecture for those periods.

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Yet Professor Müller, after with scarcely civil contempt dismissing the former, turns with delight towards the other and exclaims : ‘ This is what I call History ’!

We are, as already intimated, if anything, even more in the dark about Religion in China at this time. A notion was taken up by some of the popular French philosophers a century or more ago, that trusty records of history had been discovered in that mysterious country, which would carry us far back of any other such among men. But this opinion has disappeared upon more knowledge of the facts. That strange land, which seems to us the very home of unchanging institutions and unbroken succession of records, we now know to have been the arena of frequent revolutions and wars, which have again and again broken off all the clues of past history. We have nothing really earlier than Confucius, who was not born for fifteen centuries after Abraham. For the so-called annals and traditions of the 2000 years before, we must trust as we can to what these later writers tell us was recovered by tradition and memory from books which themselves had utterly perished. Even since Confucius, and long after the last of the Hebrew prophets wrote, the greatest of the Chinese emperors made a most strict search for all old books, in order that they might be destroyed ; and it is only probable that a few of them escaped this, and have come down to our time. But from these later remains, and what we do know now of the



actual religion of the Chinese, some fair conjectures may be made of what it was in Abraham's day. And in some respects it thus appears quite different from, in others strongly resembling, those pagan religions already described. The very interesting discovery has lately been made of evident connection between the early Chinese and the Babylonians (see *Quarterly Review*, 1883). There are plain traces also of intercourse and mutual influence of China and India in those remote ages. On the other hand, their distant places, walled off from Western and Southern Asia by the greatest mountains and cold sterile tracts of the world, and their own ingenious, industrious, and yet unsocial character, have kept the earlier tendencies of Religion from being at all modified by those of the bordering peoples.

Thus the real religion of the Chinese people, of the many millions—not of the few thousands who are known to us as rulers and ambassadors, literary men, or rich merchants,—is a very superstitious idolatry and worship of their ancestors. The smaller class mentioned practise much the same ceremonies, but profess a sort of 'positive philosophy,' such as is maintained in place of Religion by some Europeans now, of which Confucius and Laotze are the prophets. And of both classes alike, notwithstanding the superstitions, it may be said that the religion of the Chinese is the least religious in spirit of any nation's. While it retains more of the 'moral' part, it has lost more of the spiritual than that of many a people less industrious, ingenious, peaceful, and wealthy. The instinctive need of worship, and sense of something beyond this world of our senses, and above ourselves, is gratified by frequenting great and gorgeous temples, burning paper and incense, bowing down to grotesque images, and a sort of worship of the departed spirits of their parents and other ancestors. Yet the idea of our future life as being adjudged for us by the Great Eternal God and Creator of all, the thought of such a Person at all, seems to have been lost among them for all these ages. There is no actual word in their language for Religion; the nearest approach to it is one that means teaching or doctrine. Those who have been translating the Word of God into the language of His Chinese creatures have hardly been able to

find a word in it for His Name, or rather to agree upon which of some other words was the best for this, and should be so appropriated. The people themselves, and their chief teachers (as Confucius and others), rather representing the popular thought than inventing it, seem to have early chosen to 'forget God' for personal love and worship most effectually, by reasoning that this world and life are all they really know of, and so that for men to make the most of these is all there is of truth.

Yet they were not given up entirely to the natural result of this—the worst mistake in 'conduct'—*i. e.* the cruel struggle of fierce and false selfishness, by which they would at last have been reduced to the smallest number of naked savages. The Good One, though forgotten, did not forget them, and kept alive among them (as we find in the writings of Confucius, so much revered by them, but which are also doubtless rather than his inventions the traditional thought of that whole people) some sense of the need of order, respect for one another's rights, and the essential decencies of human life. With this fixed in laws and customs, as well as, in some measure, in such religion as they had, they became in the course of ages one of the most numerous, peaceful, and wealthy divisions of mankind. This I believe to be a fair conjecture (and nothing more is attainable) as to the religion of this great segment of our race in the period before us.

We are left even more to like conjectures as to their kindred, the tribes who very early crossed into the other continent, and in the course of ages overspread it from one pole to the other. Yet here we find the most astonishing difference. The American Mongolians, in their perverted and imperfect religion, took a reverse direction. They, most of them, neglected that side of the primitive truth which calls for peaceful submission to authority, for quiet industry, and honesty in providing for the needs of this life. Thus while the Chinese gathered into a great, compact nation, with law and order, they wandered apart into small and jealous tribes of idle hunters and fierce 'warriors.' But, on the other hand, they preserved more the true thought of God Himself, and of a future life for man. And so though there is nothing whatever historical as to them through all the ages of our

race until some three or four centuries ago, they were found then with ideas of the 'Great Spirit,' and eloquent words about the souls of the dead, that must have survived from the days of the one true Religion ; while China, with its ingenious arts and luxuries, had been given up to a base, worldly, and selfish blindness to all that is really great in our nature and destiny.

The nations of the North Mediterranean shore, whom we are probably right in supposing to be of the same great branch of mankind as the Indians and Persians, have no real history so far back. What we do know of their earliest religion by lingering tradition is, as with all the others last mentioned, of a far-off past, in which men were more innocent and happy than ever since. The earlier rites and belief were also simpler and less superstitious than afterwards.<sup>1</sup> The same is true of North Europe, as well as we can gather from the oldest German and Gothic legends, the Eddas, etc. It is a fact in all these, explain it as we may, that the more just and spiritual ideas of God and of our life are not in proportion to the wealth, inventions, 'civilisation,' or literature of any people, but usually in the reverse order. There are some instances, as of the Polar tribes, or those of the farthest migration and greatest isolation in some parts of Africa and the South Sea, in which men are both brutish and most superstitious. But it was the Egyptians, Persians, Babylonians, Chinese, and Indians whose religion was most unworthy of man. The barbarians of America and those of Northern Europe and early Greece were much less unspiritual.

<sup>1</sup> See Plato, *Leg.* 680 ; Gladstone, *Juventus Mundi* ; also *infra*.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CAUSES AND PROCESS OF THE GREAT DEFECTION.

THESE are the simple facts, in the main, as to the actual Religion of mankind about 500 years after the Flood. They are none the less facts that they are humiliating to us as a race, or that we have a sentimental repugnance to believing that it was only the very few among whom the truth and beauty of Religion survived, while for all the rest it had been perverted into gloomy and cruel, or else silly and vicious, superstitions. We might as well deny that in Egypt the only fertile and habitable land was the narrow strip on the Nile banks, because it *could* not be that nine-tenths of that country was a sterile desert. We also see in the religions of the Pagan nations considerable differences, and yet greater resemblance of thought and sentiment. This resemblance also holds as to the remains of primitive truth, which they all contain, and the general tradition that mankind had once been happier and better than ever since.

Can we in any way understand the causes and process of this terrible change? It is a proper matter for our study. It may be most profitable for the great work of restoring the truth of Religion among all mankind to trace, so far as possible, how men began to have this and that form of the false. Much such research has already been attempted. It has a fascinating and yet a rightful interest for the strongest minds. But the first reasonable step in this inquiry is (and if this should be neglected by us now, or has been by any former explorer, the result of all the work would very likely be of no value) to see whether the Word of God, in its account of true Religion, and as an incident of that, gives us any suggestion of the history of the false.

Such suggestions we have in the Book of Moses of the 'strange gods' and 'other (after-) gods' of Egypt and Canaan, and later on in the Old Testament, when so often the distinction is made between 'the nations (the bulk of mankind) that forget God' and a certain small 'people' who alone remember Him. If it were only that powerful verse (ver. 17) of the ninth Psalm that said this, it would be a suggestion to be much pondered. But in substance this represents many like passages<sup>1</sup> in which, even from the days of Job (viii. 13), to 'forget God' is to forsake the true Religion, as to remember Him is being faithful in it.

Still, for that great, terrible, and mysterious question, How came these all to forget—and so not to know—the true God? our chief guide is in that very Gospel in which we found the clue to the history of true Religion. It is so especially, as St. Paul was 'moved by the Holy Ghost' to write in the Epistles to the Romans and Hebrews (or whoever was the author of the latter, if any make a question of that).

And taking our first lesson from the Epistle to the Hebrews, we may understand that, as it was 'by faith' that 'the elders'—the patriarchs of holy truth—stood fast in it and taught it to their children, so it was by want of faith that the rest of men 'forgot God.' Being averse to obedient love of Him, they chose to 'walk by sight' in life—to 'love the world,' to hide from His commandments of self-control and self-denial in pride, selfishness, anger, and ungoverned animal passion. They would not humble themselves before His invisible presence in penitent prayer for forgiveness and spiritual grace, and His loving care for all their wants. They hid from the thought of Him in false worship of 'the things which are made': 'they chose new gods.' Thus, as Abraham's 'faith was counted to him for righteousness,' so their want of faith was counted to them for unrighteousness.

But it is in the famous passage at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans that we find the direct account of

<sup>1</sup> Including the 120 places where the A.V. has 'Gentiles' for גוֹיִם (see *supra*, p. 296). It is worth notice that in this very ninth Psalm that same word *goyim* is twice translated 'nations,' and three times 'heathen,' with nothing whatever in the general sense to indicate a difference of meaning. The 'Revision' is better here, but with much retention elsewhere of the mistranslation 'Gentiles.'

this process, as God has been graciously pleased to reveal it to us; and the passages we have already noticed will now disclose more of their force to us, and thus be the better understood from them: 'Because that, when they knew God, they *glorified* Him not *as God*; . . . but became empty in their imaginations (rather, reasonings, contentions, arguings,—in substance, all *their own cogitations*, as distinguished from *His teachings*), and their foolish heart was darkened (*not* illuminated, as men fancy they always are by such self-confident and disobedient thoughts). Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and (as a part of that irreligious folly inventing a religion more to their minds than what is true and spiritual) changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man. . . . Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the Creation rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections,' etc.

We have here an account of the beginnings of all false religion quite clear and strong upon the mere reading, but which also needs, and will much reward, careful study. There was especially in the writer's mind at the time one variety of 'Aryan' religion—that of the Greeks. But it applies in principle to all the other departures from the primitive, as we have already observed them. And it is altogether different from—in fact, utterly contradictory of—the 'natural' and 'philosophical' accounts of the 'origins' of all such, to which I have already alluded. If they are true, it is not. If it is *the* truth, as we have it direct from God, the Christian must at once reject the other with abhorrence.

'When they knew God.' They began with the greatest and most blessed of all truth. It is the purpose of man's life, it is that life itself, to love God with all his heart, and to act according to that love,—that is, to 'glorify' Him. The two words 'love' and 'glorify' in this sacred use always have that express relation. As we are to love Him 'with all the heart,' so we are to 'do all to the glory of God.' But these men would not. They preferred the love of self, and

its gratification in love of the world, and in desiring what He forbade. They wished not to have Him in mind as a check upon such thoughts by constant gratitude and obedient love, but to 'forget' Him as much as possible. 'They glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their cogitations, and their foolish heart was darkened.' Some, doubtless, set themselves up as specially wise leaders of the rest in what all preferred to spiritual, humble, and penitent piety toward the Holy and Good One; and the others thought themselves very wise in following this, instead of the fears and prejudices of the few devout. 'Professing themselves to be wise, they became (really) fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image,' etc.

This is what the wise Egyptians, foremost in arts, literally made haste to do in Abraham's day; what the Greeks and Romans, most elegant and intellectual of 'Aryans' in St. Paul's day, had done with their treasures of beauty in the human form for idols, and of architecture for temples, and were then copying the most debased superstitions of Egypt. It was what the Indian 'Aryans' did, and do still, with idols more hideous than were almost anywhere else invented, to express the glory of the Divine! So had even the Persians in their dreadful worship of the *Evil*, and their disobedience (in pretence that the sun represented Him) to God's command to have no visible object of adoration. For we may fairly infer from the rejection, by all the true worshippers, of idols (though all around them practised idolatry), and anything else upon which the senses could fasten in worship—from the very words of the Third Commandment, as given afterwards, and quite decisively from the very passage now before us, that from the first men were 'warned of God' not to use any natural object to represent Him in their worship. It is only the 'image' that is represented in terms first (ver. 23). But the later and more powerful sentence (ver. 25) is as much against any moon- or star-worship, or the *fire* of the Persians to represent that, as it is against images. It is the worship of the 'creature, instead of the Creator.'

Thus true Religion is represented as the blessing and honour of all mankind at first. Every sort of the false came

by a perverse departure from that, in quite various ways,—from want of love and faith : of love, in grateful worship and self-denying obedience to the Will of God in His Commandments ; of faith, in ‘ seeing Him Who is (and though He is) invisible,’ and trusting in His mercy to humble and penitent sinners. They preferred their own thoughts and inventions to His words for truth. Thus while, as a general thing, they dared not give up all religion, and believe in nothing above themselves, and beyond their own world (for never have but a few of any company of men enough for a tribe or nation descended to that folly),<sup>1</sup> they contrived false ones as substitutes for that truth. In place of the bright glory of the Blessed and Almighty, ‘ the incorruptible God,’ they made images of men or beasts, or even hideous and monstrous figures, uglier than anything natural, to kneel before, and pray and sacrifice to, or else gave the like false worship to the ‘ host of heaven,’ or other natural objects or forces.

This wickedness, like all other, had one part of its punishment in their being ‘ given up ’ by God to those degrading vices from which true Religion would have been their best protection. They even, naturally enough in such a case, made these a part of their religion.

Thus Religion, which was the most beautiful and precious ‘ truth of God,’ they ‘ turned into a lie.’ As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased (or senseless, *ἄδóκιμος*) mind, etc. The intelligence was degraded as concerned matters of Religion and conduct, so as, however ingenious otherwise, to receive and practise the most absurd and contradictory things (the more intelligent and ‘ civilised ’ being often the worst instances of this) and the most disgusting immoralities. This terrific picture is concluded by repeating the judgment that they are not innocent because of their inherited errors and false education : ‘ they are without excuse : for, knowing the judgment of God,’ etc. This false religion, which was better than none, had still reminded them of a Divine Power which was for all good, and against all evil ; and to this responded in their hearts the wonders of the world around them, and the

<sup>1</sup> If the French Republic of 1792-1800 be an exception, its brief career is the strongest illustration of this truth.



mysteries of their own souls' life, and the thought of its endless future. Therefore they were still conscious of choosing evil rather than good, and of Divine displeasure for this.

All of this is in direct contradiction of the opinion put forth by some writers, and allowed on sentimental grounds by many Christian people now: that the Pagan religions were accepted by God as true worship of Him. Even some sentences of our Holy Scriptures are quoted to that effect. But beside that which we have just seen to be explicit and conclusive to the contrary, so is also the whole tenor of them. There are twenty passages of that kind to one of the two or three of which such use is attempted. Even the fair meaning of *them* is to the same effect, though, if it did not seem so at first, the candour of those who take this for the Word of God would seek some other construction of them than one which is against that truth. The one (as quoted from Kuenen) by Prof. Müller (see *India*, etc.) is a pitiful twisting of one of the most glorious prophecies of the future prevalence of the truth. All other worship is regarded, as of 'after-gods,' inventions of a later perversity. So does St. Paul soon after, in this very writing, quote David's description of the Pagan nations as applying also in his day (and now): 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way,' etc. (Rom. iii. 11, Ps. xiv. 1-3, etc.) And Solomon's great sentence is the same in substance, 'God hath made man (אדם) upright, but they have sought out many inventions.'<sup>1</sup>

In all this is implied a like guilty responsibility of the later generations in receiving this false religion from their ancestors, as being also their choice and act. This is the express ground upon which these Pagans of the first Christian century, as well as all before them, are adjudged 'guilty before God,' as the whole matter is summed up at the end (ver. 32): 'Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.' In this are as plainly included the acts of false religion de-

<sup>1</sup> In the LXX. *διαλογισμοίς*, reasonings, imaginations, as in St. Paul to the Romans, i. 21, etc.

scribed in vers. 23-25, etc., as what is immoral. Thus a man's having received a false religion by education does not make him innocent in the practice of it. He has still a secret consciousness,<sup>1</sup> more or less obscure, that he is in this doing evil instead of good. It comes from the dim survival in every soul of us of the original Word of God to man and his responding nature, witnessed to him also by all things around him, 'visible and invisible,' that he ought to 'love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself.' And this inheritance of guilt was especially instanced as to *false religion* in the Second Commandment, as afterwards given: 'visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me,' etc. False religion is especially the hating God, the refusing the love which is due to Him. So they who observe true Religion are those 'who love Him and keep His Commandments,' beginning with the 'first and great.' But even in this most lofty aspect of His holy justice His grace still prevails (justice 'to the *third* and *fourth* generation, mercy to *thousands*') to observe and accept any little act of true Religion, by whomsoever performed, even by one who had never known any form of it but the false.

Doubtless this history of mankind, in which for long ages it was only the very few who really 'knew God,' is in its details a vast and terrible mystery which we cannot, and need not, fully understand. So far as God gives us a clue to the general understanding of it we may and should

<sup>1</sup> It is greatly to be lamented that from Platonism or other Greek philosophy has got among speculative Christians the deification of an imaginary something called 'conscience,' which, for what we ought to do, takes the place of God, or of our own minds, or both; and thus the simple truth of these matters is quite confused. Not only almost all our books, but the ordinary speech of Christians in these later ages (for there was nothing of the sort at first), is full of this notion, so that the simple truth and common sense of God's Word are obscured. Where in those wiser times can we find the phrase now so common, or anything equivalent to it, that 'a man ought to obey the dictates of his own conscience'? The only such 'dictates' then allowed were *God's Commandments*. There is surely nothing like it in the Old Testament, and all supposed verbal suggestion of it in the New is from misconception of the word *συνείδησις*, which can easily be shown to have no such meaning. (See also *The Reign of God*, p. 378, etc.)

pursue that. But our part, then, is to learn of God His gracious truth; not to decide by what we call our reason what part of His Word ought to be, and therefore is, true. For common sense in matters like this is at least as much violated by a lack of humility and reverence as by superstition and credulity. Wherever it is at all a question of what God has revealed to us, it is neither humble nor reverent for us to refuse to accept any facts as thus revealed until our minds are satisfied with them.

So in the present instance we should only strain and distort our intellectual capacity by making it the measure of the facts of this mystery, deciding that, if this is true, that cannot be, and the like. The greatest of these facts is the love of God, Who will never do anything but what is just and gracious. But if upon such grounds we insist that He has not done this or that which He says He has, or, what is the same thing, that His words cannot have their plain sense, we are, for one thing, guilty of ridiculous self-conceit. The voice comes from above (in this same Epistle to the Romans, ix. 20), 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' It is our wisdom and honour to believe all His words of grace to us; to act according to them as we understand; what of them we do not understand to receive with loving awe.

For the present inquiry we know that in the unfathomable wonder of His long-suffering grace and purpose of salvation for 'all nations,' He had in Abraham's day (and this was to continue for 2000 years more) preserved His truth from these perversions in only a very small part of mankind. If, with humility and reverence, we ask whether He has told us how He regarded the rest—the *ἔθνη* or nations ('Gentiles'),—and whether some, at least, of these countless millions may not have in fact (as St. Peter says, God would have accepted them *if* they had) 'feared God and worked righteousness' in that imperfect way that any of us actually ever do in this debased life, we must be content with the Divine words which describe His general attitude toward all those nations and generations. St. Paul himself is that one of His prophets whose mission was mostly to such people.

There are related in the Acts of the Apostles two incidents of this, which took place long before this Epistle to the Romans (formerly Pagans themselves) was written. In the first (Acts xiv. 11-18) some simple country people at Lystra, in Asia Minor, were so struck by a miracle of healing performed by him that they took him and his companion for two of their 'gods' come down to earth—as, according to their mythologic legends, they had done in long-past ages. They gathered to do them sacrifice and other worship. The Apostles, shocked at this, ran among them, protesting in these powerful words: 'Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, Which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' The only God had for ages 'suffered all nations to walk in their own ways' of false religion. Yet all that time the blessings of sky and earth, which they had ascribed to their false Jupiter and other such, were testifying to men the truth about Him. Now His messengers had come to proclaim to them that they should 'turn from these vanities (false and silly things) to serve the living God.'

Next we see the one who thus warned the Lystrans, at Athens, in the midst of the most splendid temples and ceremonies of that religion, and also of the most intelligent and acute-minded of Pagan philosophers, claiming either to give a rational account of the popular religion, or 'professing to be (too) wise' to believe it really (though they practised it), and in their belief replacing it by mere 'imagination' about 'eternal principles,' which were, if anything, less truly religious than the superstitions of the people. To them all alike he proclaims the same truth of the One Only God, challenging them by their very false religion as an acknowledgment that there was a Divine Person above man, and by one of their altar-inscriptions, 'To the (or "an"—the argument is the same) Unknown God,' that they did not know the True Divine, the One Only God, the 'Maker of all things,

and Judge of all men,' the only true Deity for all races and souls of men alike. Their mythologies and philosophies were alike the false inventions of men. He had come with a message from the True One to call them from these 'vanities,' and show them the good and right way. God had been always ready to help any who would have groped after Him again in that darkness, which was the fault of their own perverseness; and, in fact, He was always before their eyes in goodness and glory, if they would have opened their eyes to see. This unknowing (*ἄγνοια*, 'Agnosticism') of Him by all the great nations of men He had with wonderful forbearance 'overlooked'<sup>1</sup> for ages. But now His summons came to all to believe in the Divine Saviour and Judge of all, and in Him to receive light and salvation of true Religion.<sup>2</sup>

It is plain from all this, and all the rest of the Word of God concurring, that whatever we may reasonably think as to *how many*, in this feeling after God in the darkness, ever actually found Him, the right solution of that question is not in the notion that the worship of false gods was true Religion for those people, as much as that of Jehovah was for Abraham. That He may have accepted this in place of that, in some cases, seems to me possible in the wonders of His grace to us all. But that is another thing. Yet Christians (if Professor Müller would allow me to count him among them; or, if not, at least many good Christians who do not dare to differ from anything which appears in his

<sup>1</sup> *ὑπεριδῶν*, 'winked at,' is certainly an incorrect and unfortunate translation.

<sup>2</sup> It is a curious instance of our time that a learned and able clergyman of the English Church, doubtless altogether engrossed in a supposed verbal advantage of argument, has maintained lately, as against the 'Agnostics,' that all Christians ought to claim that title for themselves. And he proceeds to quote for this, not only the 'Fathers' as 'Agnostics to a man,' but Our Lord's and other words of Holy Scripture. Of course one can so manage words as to do this with a certain ingenuity. But it is at the expense of the plain sense. The Word of God says indeed that we cannot know Him entirely. But it also does say, most expressly say, that we can *know* Him,—nay, that we must, at the peril of eternal death. Again and again it describes that state of fearful peril as the *ἄγνοια Θεοῦ*, with this (His Own words) as the only alternative: 'And this is life eternal: to know Thee, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.'

name, as, *e.g.* see *India*, etc.,) sometimes accept this as the only wise and 'liberal' view.

The general result of our inquiry so far is that Religion did indeed survive among all the nations of men in the idea of unseen superior Power to which they must render worship and sacrifice ; in laws, customs, and thoughts of good conduct ; in a dim, confused, and variously perverted idea that our life does not end with death here, but that a more lasting future, which is adjudged according to the 'deeds done in the body' now, begins then ; that all mankind were in some far-off past much more innocent and happy than now, and that the Divine is really One Good and Holy Person. But the reverence and worship were, in fact, given to many imaginary persons who were not really as good as some men and women. The religious rites were generally gloomy or silly, cruel and indecent. Justice, purity, and sweetness in human life were often rather the more outraged than promoted by Religion, of which they should be a part. And all this inversion, and, as it were, travesty of the greatest truth, had come about by mankind having generally preferred what was false to the Divine and true—forsaking a Religion which would ennoble and save them by the self-denial of obedient love to God and keeping His Commandments, for inventions of their own, which would, in some degree, indulge and palliate selfish worldliness, while they had something to satisfy, in a measure, the mastering sense of Divine power and the instinct of worship.

This tremendous transformation of the truth of God about Himself and men's relation to Him is distinctly described as their false invention, their 'changing that truth into a lie.' That is so plainly the true, the only rational and credible account of the origin of Pagan worship, that it would seem as if any honest seeker of truth would accept it with grateful promptness as soon as it came to his knowledge, and at once abandon any theories which he might have taken up before, of men's first discovering the idea of Religion by means of these superstitions. That so many well-informed and keen-witted men do actually reject this truth, and insist upon those theories, is itself only to be accounted for as a like instance of men, 'when they knew

God,' becoming 'vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart darkened.'

We must not refuse this truth for fear of being called 'blind and bigoted.' It is none the less a fact because these hard words are used of those who accept it. That so many well-meaning Christians are now ready to concede, or at least afraid to dispute, that any man who is eminent in a literary way, or for research in Natural Science, must have some good reason for his questioning the plain meaning of such passages of God's Word as this, is a part of the false philosophy that has got mixed in with all the literary opinion of our age. Whether we call the postulate that the soul of man loves truth for its own sake, and only needs to *know* more to quit all error,—whether we call this Platonism, or recognise in it as much the work of many other ancient (as well as modern) reasoners—or, better yet, the self-sufficiency and vanity of all mankind alike, it is itself a most mischievous error, which taints all that it touches. The TRUTH Himself has said, 'Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

When the theories come to arrange and account for the details of fact, they are, in any of their variant and contradictory shapes, utterly powerless to adjust those facts. That the 'scientific' observers, while they agree in denying the true account, disagree with one another as to the process, is of itself most significant. In this they resemble the confusions and inconsistencies of the false religions themselves. Some will have it that 'Nature-worship' is to account for all; some that it is 'Hero-worship,' with various varieties of these two theories; and there are others yet. If they could all be right, and the differences of the several religions come from the entirely separate inventions of different races—this does not accord with the fact of the original unity of mankind,—or that of their having a like *nature*, which would be sure to 'work out' (if that were the process) what was, in the main, alike, just where, in fact, we find the differences. For it is another fact that the differences are such as no 'general law' of advancing intelligence can account for. On the other hand, the resemblances (and the differences) are precisely such as would be when a great primary and primitive truth had been

perverted by the erroneous 'imagnations' of different tribes ; in some instances by the mastering talent of a few men (or even of only one), who pretended to Divine suggestion, making use of some striking local event or object (as of the Nile in Egypt).

As an instance of this discarding of facts for the sake of false *διαλογισμοί*,<sup>1</sup> take this fact of the general consent in the earliest traditions that they had received their religion from their ancestors, that no such earlier age was credited with this as a first *invention*—indeed, that 'the gods' (or Divine Power) themselves had first instructed men in this, which they taught their children in turn.

Now, if we had no information about this which was better yet, we might be excused for conjecturing that there had been a first human discovery or invention of the idea of Divine Power and what we had to do with it, but that the deep policy of these founders of Religion had successfully extinguished this fact for the sake of striking awe into the people, and ensuring a superstitious, obedient faith. When, as now, we have the true solution before us, how can we discard it for the false?

Take, for instance, the Sanscrit variety of the theory in question, as perhaps the one most in vogue now. Read with attention the latest and best setting forth of it (certainly with the highest authority) in *India*, etc. And what have we at the utmost? The slenderest basis of fact and the widest leaps of conjecture, leaving common sense quite unsatisfied, and wondering whether this clever writer is himself at all pleased with the result. If we, too, are 'Aryans,' with all our language and intelligence built into one another in that wonderful way from those far-off ages, how has it come about that these 'Aryan' thoughts now seem to us repulsive and senseless, and need to be apologised for by their great admirers, with the intimation that it is because we have other sorts of minds than those Indians that we do *not*

<sup>1</sup> We may take this remarkable word in either of the more limited senses in which we may render it in English—*reasonings, cogitations, or imaginations*, this last involving that profound truth that false reasonings, especially those which are unspiritual and irreligious, are largely made up of mere imaginings or self-sufficient conceits.



relish the *Vedas*, while the 'Shemitic' sayings that date further back go to our hearts and hold such Divine mastery of our belief?

Let any one try this by setting the few finest passages (as their admirers distinguish them) of the *Vedas* by the side of a hundred from the Old Testament—say the first part of Genesis, the Song of Moses, the eighth and fifteenth Psalms, etc. As a fine 'evolution' or (devolution) of the human intelligence, how do the Indian writings compare? We should in simple fairness continue the process, and set the *Ramayana* by the Prophets, and the *Puranas* by the Gospels.<sup>1</sup> First we have a confused personification and adoration of 'all things bright' (and dark?), with some expression of spiritual ideas, in the midst of much more of the very opposite; then most disgusting superstitious observance and worship of hideous images, selfish and sensual tyranny of a priesthood, and abject immoral slavery of the people. What is the next step in such a history of Religion, after this has reigned over a hundred million people for one or two thousand years?

Is this the 'bright consummate flower' of the 'Aryan' genius? Yes; that is the fair conclusion. But the theorist does promise some further and future development of the Indian religion, surpassing all our past (the 'Jewish thought' and all). For there is now a considerable and increasing number of the Brahmins who are devising a new metaphysical religion, made up out of the sayings of the *Vedas*, with some ideas from our Holy Scriptures, and a considerable supplement of 'modern thought.' Even my own country, the most altogether modern of all, is to contribute largely to this. For one of the enthusiastic young Hindu leaders quotes from the writings of Mr. R. W. Emerson a rhapsodical prophecy of the 'new Church founded on moral science,' etc., as being the best account of their hopes. Now, it is somewhat the fashion to say that Mr. Emerson is 'the great American philosopher.' Perhaps he is. But that is one of

<sup>1</sup> This is an irresistible necessity for all who insist upon necessary 'evolution' or 'development' in these things. Yet all critics agree that the oldest Indian writings are the most spiritual and have the largest proportion of fine passages.

the severest things that could be said of all that 'philosophy' can do in the domain of Religion. For, with all his poetic talent and felicity of elegant expression of whatever he really knows anything about, he is one of the most blind and foolish men who ever, while the glorious and beautiful light of heaven had been shining over the land of his birth and so much else of the world for ages, 'by wisdom (*σοφία* or philosophy) knew not God,' and of those who, instead of seeing and loving Him in all things,—to the sound of their own 'cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music,' have fallen down to worship 'the nameless Thought,' which was really their own intellectual vanity.

This society of the *Brahmo-Somaj* does not even now count the hundredth part of the caste of Brahmins—always the smallest and tyrant class, who, with profession of sublime thoughts of which they kept the monopoly, held all the rest of their countrymen, except the princes and soldiers—and even they were in abject fear of them,—in a slavery of superstitious forms and miserable poverty. But whence came even the suggestion of this new wisdom, these high religious thoughts, which are yet to enlighten and ennoble all mankind? From the Christian missionaries; as when Ram-Mohun-Roy, the acknowledged founder of the new religion, first received the Gospel from them with delight, and then fell into the misleading ambition of inventing something better. Meanwhile, spite of all great difficulties—one of the chief being that there are born Christians in England and America who reject its power of love and humility to save us all,—that Gospel pushes on its way, having already brought (not a few thousand Brahmins to as much spiritual self-conceit as the apostate Christians of Europe, but) hundreds of thousands of *all* ranks of the Hindu people—each one of whom is as important in the real history of Religion as the 'philosophic' man—into the light and purity of the 'holy fellowship.'

Were we able now to trace in detail the various theoretic accounts of the other false religions,—Greek, Chaldæan, Egyptian, etc., as beginning with 'Nature-worship,' etc., we should find them, while not at all agreeing in their accounts of the process, alike unsatisfying. Whenever, as in the case of Hesiod (*Theogony*, but see p. 294), or what we know of some

such sayings of the Egyptian priests, all the adventures of 'gods,' 'goddesses,' etc., are resolved into an ingenious allegory of the 'operations of Nature'—suns and stars, clouds, winds, seas, seasons, etc.,—we will find that the allegory was invented long after the substance of the mythology was a literal religion to the people. Some additions to the legends may have been made afterwards by poets, and received then with the rest. But most of the pretended parabolic truths can be fitted to the old superstition only in a very far-fetched way, and as some bright poetic genius used its 'licence' very boldly.

The 'Nature-worship' is so evident a failure to account for some of these religions (or for all or any of them) that the theory of some others is, that the idea of worship began with admiration for heroes and other 'mighty dead' of the various tribes. Other writers yet impute the first thought of an unseen spirit—afterwards of ancestor-worship (as does Professor Müller, as a supplement to the 'Nature-worship'), even, in some cases, of 'the great gods'—to men's thoughts of their kindred who had died before them, and of whom they came by a very slow process to think as still existing—though the dead tree, or even the dead ox, gave no such suggestion. Others yet (Professor Whitney *et al.*) are certain that it was by *dreaming*, and afterwards remembering the unreal persons of the dream, that mankind began first to conceive of any real persons who were invisible, and so at last of spirits and deities. For each of these notions something could be alleged and ingeniously set forth as arguments. Yet each of the parties can adduce many facts which the other's theories will not fit. And besides, there is the utter failure to account for the bewildering confusion and contradiction, the puerilities and hideous cruelties and indecencies in which all these religions abound, if they were the wholesome rising 'evolution' of man's mind and heart.

But as soon as we leave all these fancies, and make use of the *fact* that the growth of such religion was not the discovery of higher, and hitherto unknown, truth, but a perverse departure from what was already known—from truth higher than our powers of discovery by thought, and from the beginning essential to our true life,—all is simple and clear.

Their very confusions and absurdities, their preposterous jumble of notions which have nothing in common, their immoralities, their cruelties, are just what we should reasonably expect. We can then go on to inquire, with due caution and reserve, as to how probably the false religions took the forms they did, as they appear more or less alike in all; and the peculiarities of race or place in each of them; as also how the primitive truth survived in various parts or degrees in one and another of them.

Yet we need not spend any great thought upon this fearful mystery any more than it is for most men to undergo the weariness and disgust of long study in a museum of morbid anatomy.<sup>1</sup> Some, perhaps, as messengers of the Lord and Saviour to heathen people now, should do so, in order to understand the education and habitual thoughts of those to whom they are sent. Yet St. Paul himself, and all those greatest 'missionaries,' do not seem to have needed more of such information than the general truth which he gives us, as I have quoted it, and then to go on directly to their 'glad tidings' of the true Religion.

The tendency and purpose of this being once in action, it was easy for men to find other objects of worship than God; first, perhaps, upon the pretence of greater reverence in not addressing Him directly, but through representatives, or that He Whom no man could see must be kept in mind by visible

<sup>1</sup> Among the strange things over which a future wise Christendom (if the world ever sees that—or, better yet, as there will be such after He comes under Whose rule 'truth shall spring out of the earth') will surely wonder, is the custom of our generation to educate even the young Christian maidens in the filthiness of the Greek mythology. To understand poetic allusions in our own or ancient languages is small compensation for defiling the memories and imaginations of those who will have hard work, at the best, to keep their thoughts clean in this evil world and life. I have seen a 'text-book' of the sort, some 400 octavo pages, giving quite a full account of the delightful household of the Greek and Roman Pantheon, evidently most carefully prepared by a *woman*, who accepted entirely the theory that this was all an allegory of 'Natural Science,' though a really learned Doctor of Divinity, in an 'introduction to the book,' deprecates this view, and gives profound and powerful arguments for the true idea of a primitive revelation, of which these religions were corruptions. The author's work is done as circumspectly and euphemistically as the matter allows of. Yet one cannot but wonder whether she thought all these doings of her heroes and heroines to be so innocent and decent, and that her young sisters would see it in the same pretty way.

objects. The glorious sun, the fair moon of evening, the vast multitude of mysterious stars crowding the sky of night on the one hand ; the great Angels of God, of whom they knew by tradition, on the other ; and also in the growing confusion of thought, what seemed mighty unseen forces around them,—fire, storm, and cloud ; the wonderful march of seasons and years, and the ‘great and wide sea,’ to such as came in sight of it. This process once begun, there seems no limit as to how far it might be pursued, or with what absurdity of combining in the thought of these deities, and in the actual religious rites, notions that had no sort of congruity. Thus by degrees, as generations succeeded one another, engrossed in the needs, struggles, and ambitions of selfish life, and in migrations and wars, this ‘departing from the living God’ would proceed so far that *almost* all thought of the Only True Divine would have perished.

We must always keep in mind that the aversion to obedient love of God, and the revolt from His commandments of love to their fellow-men, was also thus increasing. All the forms of selfishness were developing. The tyranny of the stronger or more cunning few, and the slavery of the rest, were taking shape. These ‘rulers’ gave such colour in various ways to the unfolding ‘imagination’ of false religion as suited their purposes—sometimes, no doubt, according to the useful and necessary purposes of order and law.

The sentiment of slavish and guilty fear having displaced in Religion that of penitent and self-denying love, the sacrifices and other rites took on that hue. It was the evil angels rather than the good who were thought of as the deities. They were to be propitiated by what was cruel. In this, I conjecture, is a glimpse of that terrible mystery by which God’s Word, in several places of both Testaments (see Deut. xxxii. 17 ; Ps. cvi. 37 ; 1 Cor. x. 20 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; Eph. vi. 12, etc.), gives us to understand that in some way, while these Pagan gods were really *nothing*, only empty names and imaginations, still their votaries in them worshipped ‘demons’ or ‘devils,’ and that Satan himself is ‘the god of this world,’ as it has forsaken the True.

Death itself would never suffer men utterly to lose all idea of Religion after they had once known it. That part

of it which tells us of our spiritual life as the main thing, of our future judgment and destiny, was recalled to every man by his seeing the death of another. The fear and anxiety, the bitterness of this loss of the beloved, and the longing to see them again,—these things also would have their expression in the new religions. Very easily this, in some instances, passed into the ‘ancestor-worship.’ It seems also to have been an early contrivance of tyranny, as in Egypt, to make the absolute king a representative of the chief god, or to feign that he was that god in person. So from this or the ancestor-worship, or more probably the two in conjunction, began the deification of former kings, heroes, or other public benefactors.<sup>1</sup> All this was indeed profane and absurd, but false religion is naturally full of absurdity and profanity.

It is not a part of the present discussion to apply these suggestions in detail to the various Pagan religions. Otherwise I would gladly subject my argument to this further test. Indeed I will do so yet, if this is asked or challenged, and time and life allow of it. Nor has he who undertakes that task the questionable honour of originality. Perhaps the present generation needs to be reminded that it is not merely certain brilliant men of our time, nor only, beside them, the laborious scholars of Germany of a former generation, lately becoming known to us, who have explored the history of ancient mythologies. Selden, Gale, Bryant, and Faber are English scholars who spent great research and thought upon these very matters. Our contemporaries have had some considerable advantage over them as to Indian, Egyptian, and Assyrian remains. But, on the other hand, they have made nothing like the acute and laborious search into what was then within reach, have quite neglected this, or rummaged a little in *them* for what suited their purposes. And what is more, the older writers, though somewhat hindered by an assumption that whatever was true in the religious tradition of antiquity outside of Israel must have been got from the *Scriptures* of Israel, made their inquiries by the light of

<sup>1</sup> Not that the king or hero was always a benefactor. But arbitrary and hereditary power would have it so. As Our Lord said, ‘They that exercise authority *are called* benefactors.’

God's Word as certain truth—as it is; while the others have begun and continued with the mistaken notion that they were finding out by other means how mankind first invented Religion for themselves. And this primary false assumption has misled them in research, and vitiated their conclusions. Mr. Faber's work, *The Origin of Pagan Idolatry*, though it appeared at the beginning of this century, seems to have passed quite out of notice. He was so rapid and voluminous a writer that it was probably impossible for him to be as accurate as is most to be desired in work of this kind. And so also he repeats and involves himself at times, thus confusing his argument and adding to the labour of the reader.

For all that, the book is a treasure of research in some details. Its main thought of identifying much of the mythology of the Pagans with the perversion of true traditions of the first of our race, deserves far more attention than it seems to have received. It contains a very full argument, with valuable citations and comparisons, going to show that the remarkable appearance in most of those mythologies, Greek, Indian, Egyptian, etc., of a *trinity* of chief gods, is the confused memory both of Adam and his two sons (Cain and Seth) and of the three sons of Noah. That the two sets of events so far apart, and of persons so different, were thus confounded, does not detract from the force of the argument otherwise. For absurdity is one characteristic of all these 'imagination's' of those who, 'professing to be wise' in abandoning the true Religion, 'became fools' in what they substituted for it. Let no one be sure that Mr. Faber is not right in his conjectures, at least until after he has read him. I think him wrong in saying positively, as he does, that the true Trinity of God had nothing to do with the notion of these heathen trinities. It seems far more probable that some knowledge of that high mystery was a part of man's primitive Religion, and that this was the perverse application of it to the great forefathers of us all, whose figures floated dimly in the memories of all the tribes.

He also makes it quite probable that the notion of an endless succession of worlds through past and future eternities, which the Brahmins teach, and which has been found

more or less in some of those other religions, came from discarding the tradition of Creation as an event, when the worship of the Creator was abandoned, and the Creation (His work) put in His place, whereupon also the tradition of the Flood, and of 'the world before the Flood,' was turned into this fancy of a series of worlds appearing in endless succession (much like the 'Nature-worship' and 'Evolution' of some of our men of science now). He also shows that the very name of Noah appears in the form of *Ma-nu*, *Nous* (reason), etc., as when in some of those 'imaginings' the whole world (*Kosmos*) was said to be the body of the deity, and *Nous* the soul.

Probably that very misleading tendency of human speculation about Religion later, called 'Philosophy,' was also at work in those earliest days in some of the minds that governed the rest. This would have given, even then, something of a metaphysical cast to the *διαλογισμοί*. Most of this speculation, however, we shall find at a much later period, as well in India and Persia as in Greece. And it may be, as some think, that this did, with a few men in Greece (or India, yet earlier?), four or five centuries before Our Lord, in some lines of thought work a little back toward the truth, but not for any considerable or enduring effect. Its inevitable tendency *in the main*, from first to last, has been toward intellectual vanity, misleading man from humility and faith in a *Word* of God. In any case the 'wisdom of God,' teaching us by faith in His direct Word, is plain as to all this. It uniformly sets 'the wisdom of the world,' the direct reference being to the 'philosophy' of the time, as its opposite, and as that *by which* (let us mark this well) 'the world *knew not* God.' And here, where the original deviation from true Religion is described, it was by *reasonings* (*διαλογισμοί*), in which, 'professing themselves to be wise (*σοφοί*), they became fools.'

This is naturally connected with such an inquiry as can be made within the limits of the present research into the origin of two particulars of the false religions, viz., *sun-worship* and *image-worship*, or idolatry. Some 'philosophy' now, as 'Comparative Religion,' argues that to adore the sun, moon, and stars was a natural and rational step toward



a discovery of Religion (so far as it allows that there *is* anything true and rational in that). But there are others who approach the historical question from the right point of view, as to how those who knew the true religion afterward began this sun-worship, who resolve it thus: that these men at first innocently used some visible objects as representing the One God; and that no other such so well suited this purpose as the magnificent and mighty illuminator of the world. And so they proceeded to have, as other like representatives of Him, the great light of evening and the rest of the splendid 'host of heaven,' in their march through the sky of night—whether the brighter planets with their mysterious wanderings, or the fixed stars, of such vast numbers and various brightness, moving in the most exact order through lives and generations of men.

It is very certain, by all later experience, that if this was innocently done at first, it was most unwisely done. All the later Word of God—all the History, in fact—testifies that this tended at once and inevitably to the forgetting instead of the remembering of God. As it was by *faith*, by direct spiritual apprehension, that the true worshippers, from Abel to Abraham, continued in the true Religion; so it was by deviating from this—whether with a mistaken purpose of assisting faith by sight, or what not—that the others departed from it. It would seem therefore from this consideration alone that it was probably a part of the primitive Word of God to man to forbid such 'representative' worship—a 'commandment' in substance identical with the Second at Mount Sinai, and which was directly transgressed in the first step of 'sun-worship' (or idolatry).

Thus when historically, as now, we come upon the first traces of the contrast between the false and the true in Religion, it is the interposed worship of something visible to represent God, already invading Abraham's own family, on the one hand, and the rejection of this by him. Nor does he look at sun or stars in his devotions. It is the 'Great Name' alone which represents God to him, to Whom, as unseen, he offers sacrifices and prayer. God shows him the starry sky, but only as an illustration of His promises to him, the reward of his faith in the Unseen.

In the same way, but more fully, the later Word of God in the Gospel tells us that all false worship began by '*changing* the *truth* of God into a lie, and worshipping and serving the creature (Creation) rather than (instead of) the Creator.' It would seem from this also more probable that mankind were from the first warned against this danger, and forbidden such a fatal perversion of worship, rather than left to discover it by the awful experience, the very working of which itself blinded them to the lesson. Certainly it was a wicked and forbidden thing for all mankind long before the Exodus. The same fatal notion was involved in all image-worship; and that was a great sin before Abraham. When can we reasonably suppose that the Commandment of God was given, of which this was the disobedience, unless from the beginning of men's disobedience?

In the Book of Job, however, we have a yet more positive proof of this. There is nowhere else, in the finest literature or the most refined civilisation, a grander and more beautiful picture of a good man's life than in the thirty-first chapter of that book. Has any moralist, philosopher, or poet of later ages ever equalled it? Do any elaborate 'ethics' of our day approach it in condensed sweetness, purity, and greatness of soul? How utterly unlike all the 'Talmudic' literature, to which some would in effect assign it! It breathes the free and pure air of primitive, simple, dignified, solitary life, far from the ambitious vanities and luxuries of cities—from Babylon, old or new. It sets us in the midst of a people among whom just authority punishes those who transgress the Word and Will of God, whether (vers. 9-11) in selfish passion, which invades the purity of families, or false religion (vers. 26-28), which debases the spiritual worship of God. They are a people also among whom (ver. 33) is still well remembered the tradition of Adam's Fall.

In the second of these references (vers. 26-28) is plainly recognised a false religion as already begun—perhaps upon the pretext of a 'representative' worship of the Only God—of adoring the sun and moon. However prevalent and powerful this may have already become among the richer and more 'civilised' descendants of Ham, or even invaded some tribes of his Shemitic kindred—with the people of Job

it was 'an iniquity,' and as thus 'would have denied the God that is above.' So then true Religion from the first absolutely forbade the adoration of anything visible. 'The things that are made' are to *remind* us of 'the Eternal Power and Godhead'; they are never to be adored as representing it.

Some modern writers will have it that the beginnings of the great science of Astronomy, as we find them in the Egyptian and Babylonian remains, were naturally and of necessity the beginnings of sun- and star-worship,—as if the first observers of the wonderful appearances and movements of heavenly bodies, being very ingenious and thoughtful men, and not yet having any idea of anything religious or Divine, concluded that these were 'gods,' and forthwith began to adore them, and set up temples and rituals for this worship. Now even if we did not already positively know the contrary of what is thus assumed, if God Himself had not told us that it was they who already knew of Him and the duty of spiritual worship who thus '*changed* the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature *instead* of the Creator,' it would be very foolish to put much confidence in this theory, upon the grounds given by its maintainers.

I have endeavoured to examine these with candour, and have been astonished at the insufficiency of them, were we left merely to such conjectures about all this. That they do satisfy men who cannot be satisfied by the truth of God's Word can only be accounted for by their fatal bias against that, and their eagerness to believe anything which may seem to discredit it. The same is true of their way of accounting for the ancient division of time by periods of seven days. Once that was dismissed as a mere Jewish superstition. Now that this ground is no longer tenable, but the Babylonian remains show that the *week* was well known among that people from the first, instead of acknowledging that 'God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made,' and so this became the Divine and sacred division of days for men, however perverted and afterwards lost among most of them, they set to work to 'prove' by most gratuitous guesses and assertions, without a particle of historical fact, that it was an invention of superstitious star-worship.

But how natural and plain the truth is, that in the sinful perverseness of men, instead of being reminded of God, and kept in His truth by 'all things visible as well as invisible,' just as, to the believing and devout, 'the heavens declare the glory of God,' they made use of them to forget Him, and also fastened upon 'the lights in the firmament of heaven,' which He had given us 'for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years' the fantastic devices of their false religion, not only as to their annual and monthly celebrations, but by giving the names of their star-gods to the different days of the week!<sup>1</sup>

Of course the same principle of spiritual Religion, with at least equal force, forbade image-worship. That, indeed, might be thought the most senseless of all such 'imagination.' It seems now only necessary to show it to us in its actual thought—as, for instance, in the powerful words of Psalm cxv. or Isaiah lxiv. Yet this was one of the very earliest developments of false religion, and the most enduring. Here, in Abraham's time, already it is the representative of all the rest; and so it is used all through the Book of God. St. Paul presents it at the first step of all departing from God: 'and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into *an image*,' etc.

How came intelligent man ever to think that 'the God-head is like unto anything graven by art and man's device,' even—for these were among the earliest and most honoured idols—those coarse figures of beasts and reptiles, or most grotesque and hideous shapes of what no one had ever seen? Such were the 'gods' of the wise Egyptians and of the profoundly spiritual Hindus. How came the highest thoughts to express themselves in the most monstrous and repulsive forms? For precisely in this should the love of beauty have found its best opportunity. If the later Greeks be instanced as having devoted the highest art in this way to religion,

<sup>1</sup> It would seem a curious suggestion as to which was originally the Divine day of the seven, that they gave the name of the Sun to the chief day. In all the incongruities and absurdities of 'gods many,' there pervades a tendency to use the sun as representing the chief, and even only real, deity. Bryant has shown as a most ingenious conjecture, if not conclusively, that the word *Helios*, and its equivalent in various languages, was a transfer of the sacred *El* to the false worship.

that was long after the time with which we are now concerned, and will have its due notice later. But let us consider now that it *was* to *them* that St. Paul made these very appeals as to the absurdity and real irreligion of their worship. To 'change the glory of God into an image like to corruptible man' is his very first instance of the monstrous and wicked folly of false religion. Why, indeed, should we turn away from seeing the glory of God by *faith*, to use such an 'image' of it? Even the most hideous beast might be thought to tell us only of the Creator, while the human form represents and stimulates the foolish pride of our rebellion, and the perverseness of sin against God. There is nowhere in the Gospel the slightest hint that Our Lord's Incarnation was meant to change this principle. If it had been, here would His most loving worshipper have plainly said so instead of the Divine condemnation of any 'image made like to corruptible man,' which he so plainly pronounces. Nor was such a thought known among Christians for 400 years. Some Christian writers of our day (see Lenormant, etc.) seem to favour the notion that image-worship too was at first a mere innocent device of true Religion, to assist our dulness of faith, by sensible objects to represent God. There is not the slightest countenance for this to be found in the Holy Scriptures. There is throughout them every opposite suggestion. These words in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans absolutely forbid it. Perhaps practices have crept into the worship of some Christians which need that sort of extenuation.

The other view is all natural and consistent. In the Second Commandment we have (in its somewhat local and temporary form, yet in substance) the Divine principle of worship by faith alone. No departure from this is ever expedient, or safe, or lawful. The moment we venture that we are beginning to 'become vain in our imaginations.' But how precisely the *first* step was taken toward men's making images, and then 'worshipping the work of their own hands,' must probably remain always a dark mystery. Some think that meteoric stones, which fell from the sky—as they sometimes do now—were regarded with religious awe, and so were the first stone idols, and suggested the making of

others. There seem to be some very ancient instances of such local superstition. Yet the transition from this to 'graven images' is not so very probable. Or was it from effigies of 'the mighty dead,' and in the way of hero- or ancestor-worship?

The pretended account of this in the so-called *Book of Wisdom* is not only not to be reckoned in Holy Scripture, but it seems to be of *no* value in this inquiry. It is a characteristic specimen of 'Jewish thought,' at a time when some of that people, by their long residence in Pagan countries, though adhering more exclusively than ever to the words and forms of their religion, were yet so penetrated and elated (not to say inflated) with a mixture of the Oriental and Greek 'philosophy' with that, that this displaced the spirit of the true Religion. Compare this very passage with the corresponding ones either of the Prophet Isaiah before, or the Apostle Paul afterwards, and the evident difference is that between the philosophy of men and the Word of God *to* men.

Yet any account of the rise of false Religion would be imperfect which failed to notice one great force and contrivance in it all—that of 'the devil and his angels.' For as these were concerned in the first defection of man from the love of God, so surely they would not have remained inactive in whatever opportunities of mischief it offered afterwards. Here was a vast field for such work. Our Lord also said that the chief of these evil ones is 'a liar, and the father of it.' They have been ever since assiduous in whatever can be done to make men more wicked and unhappy. It is almost inconceivable that they have not done their part by way of suggestion and temptation to those who were 'changing the truth of God into a lie.' In some dreadful way they have been not only turning religion away from God, but diverting it to themselves, as we see in the passages cited on p. 295, etc. Even one of those wonderful and terrible temptations of Our Lord is in Satan's saying to Him: 'All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt *fall down and worship me*' (St. Matt. iv. 9).

We may reasonably conjecture that the very early and continuous prevalence of sorcery and witchcraft are parts of

the false religion most directly connected with the work of evil spirits. When men once perverted the true thought of the Divine, spiritual, and invisible, from God to other objects—even if at first they proposed to adore the holy Angels,—this more naturally passed into fear of the terrible Satan and his associates than continued as grateful love of the messengers of God, and to imaginary evil spirits, to the ghosts of dead men, etc. Around this soon gathered the cruel deceits of necromancy, magic, and sorcery, which had been found in all false religions, but are only and always forbidden by the true.<sup>1</sup> (See Deut. xviii. 9-14 : ‘Thou shalt not do,’ etc.)

We are here, in the days of Abraham, upon lofty ground for a survey of the world so far. The religion of the greater part of mankind, though so degraded, is sincere in one sense—it is not a mere pretence of words. But it is not at all sincere in the highest sense. They fear and yield some obedience of fear to the Unseen Power. Yet they try to bribe, or deceive, or otherwise elude its laws. They twist the very religion into some gratification of baser desire—of gain, or of selfish and even cruel wrongs to their fellow-men. *Larv*, which begins and belongs with Religion, after a while subjects and corrupts it, and is in turn perverted further from justice by the false religion. The consciousness<sup>2</sup> of men, into which the true

<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon to find in respectable books of reference recommended by Christians [Chambers’s *Encyclopaedia*, etc.] statements attributing all the cruelties of superstition to the doctrine of God as to Satan and other evil spirits. This is a detestable falsehood, however disguised, contrary to all History, both ancient and modern, as well as a blasphemy against the Gospel—as much so as to say that the Gospel teaches us to be cruel to any of our fellow-men. There was a strange period from the Middle Ages down to within two centuries past, when, as with the notion of religious persecution, a childish *fear* of mischief to be done to the innocent by magic arts, caused things to be done in all Christendom to those accused of such arts at which we now shudder. But this has long since entirely passed away, and the more religious one is among us now, the less he fears such evil. But it *always* has prevailed in other religions, mixing the greatest cruelties and miseries with their very rites, and does now everywhere, except where the Gospel is free and powerful.

<sup>2</sup> That is, what we are aware of in our own thoughts,—not *conscience*, in the artificial and fictitious sense in which this has made its way from ‘philosophy’ into all that is said of duty in our day, and is taken for granted by Christian writers, and even by every one of us in our ordinary speech, as if it were a part of God’s Word to men that each of us had under this name another self within himself, which was, in fact, God Himself speaking to him all the time, but which any way He had directed each man to obey first—sooner even than any other of

thought of God and of our life had once entered, never entirely lost this. The thought of what is good or bad, true or false, just or unjust, pure or vile in their conduct, never ceased to be some check upon evil desire, as shown in the laws, customs, and even religion, however corrupt. In some aspects this lingering twilight of a past seemed to grow more dim with the succeeding ages. In others it would at times brighten a little with the thoughts of some men wiser than the rest, who saw more of the obscured truth, and had the courage and capacity—as princes, poets, priests, or other leaders—to influence some of their fellow-men in this. Yet that can only really be accounted for as a part of the mercy of God, Who was preserving the truth still more effectively in one family and people, according to the great mystery of His future redemption of all.

His commands, saying, ‘Above all things, obey the dictates of thy conscience,’ which teaching, if any one will find for me in the Holy Scripture, or anything equivalent to it, ‘I will be a bondman unto my lord [the finder] for ever.’



## CHAPTER XIII.

### ABRAHAM TO JOSEPH.

THAT there should be such a family and people, God now made a 'covenant'<sup>1</sup> with Abraham, of gracious promises on His part, of faith and obedience on Abraham's, for himself and all his family. Each male of them, to all their generations, was to be circumcised as a token and pledge of this. The promise of this favour and glory by which all the rest of mankind were in some future generation to be ennobled and made happy was to be fulfilled especially in a son of Sarah yet to be born, against all the 'laws of nature,' or probabilities, or apparent possibility. For Abraham to believe this is one of his acts of 'faith,' which are especially noted as proofs of true Religion in him. This alone utterly overthrows the assumption of some writers (*e.g.* Mr. Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*) that faith in God, according to the Holy Bible, is only *attending* to what is otherwise *reasonable*. But so far as men's reason went, apart from belief in this promise only upon what *God said*, nothing could be more unreasonable. Yet Abraham refused all attention to reason in this case. He did not stop so much as to take any notice of it, or have so much of a passing doubt as this would imply. God had spoken, and there was no longer place for his own thoughts except to *know* by perfect faith what was told him. It may be that some have said too much of faith as opposing and overcoming reason. True faith *in God* will not allow of such a conflict, because it will allow of no such competition as to certainty of truth; of no common level upon which the two may contend. It rises to the lofty height of the

<sup>1</sup> This is of itself a wonderful mystery of gracious love of the Great One toward His creatures.

certain truth of what God says, and leaves the other below and out of sight.

But there was an even greater proof and triumph of that faith, after the promised child had been born, in spite of the 'laws of Nature,' and the father's faith had been rewarded by seeing him grow up to a healthy lad of fourteen. Then He Who had promised and given this son to this father, commands Abraham to take the boy Isaac to a distant place alone, and there kill and burn him upon an altar, as a sacrifice to God, just such as he was used to make of a lamb or a bullock.

Let us look at this transaction with directness and simplicity, waiting to learn from it just what God teaches us thereby—not merely that we may construe it so as to support our previous notions, or to accord with our habitual feelings. It is a plain, detailed narrative of the Old Testament, corroborated and recognised by the New, as especially in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews (vers. 17-19): 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.'

We cannot treat this as an affair of mistaken judgment on Abraham's part, for he is praised and rewarded for it by the Great and Holy One as for a noble and godly act. Yet if the best we can ever do is to obey 'the laws of Nature' and 'the dictates of conscience,' it was a bad choice and deed. What could be more contrary to all those 'laws,' whether, as the fashion of saying is now, 'in the material or the spiritual world'? what more against those 'dictates,' as they really come to us by what we take for our best feelings, 'eternal principles of right,' or the *probable consequences* of our action? But his faith consisted in choosing, instead of all these, to do what God commanded, even to the point of apparently defeating the greatest and dearest promises of everything good which God had ever made to him, and in which was involved great blessing to all his fellow-men and glory to God.

Now we cannot doubt that Abraham had in him something of that 'philosophic' spirit which is in all the actual human nature—that is, the disposition to try by our reasonings whatever is merely told us,—a tendency not only innocent, but excellent in perhaps everything except what requires entirely faith and obedience, as of a child to a good father; but then, and above all in what we have directly from God, merely irrational and mischievous. This might have come into Abraham's mind, in resistance of what was so much against his wishes (not the worst and consciously evil ones, but the very best of his hopes and desires), by appealing to 'general principles,' etc., against this *commandment*. He might have said, 'Certainly I must not—I dare not—refuse this if God really commands it. But does He? Can He command that which is against my sense of right and against His Own promise? There is some illusion about it.'

Once had Abraham thus philosophised in objection to what God said He was about to do. When the Supreme Lord told him of His purpose to destroy the 'cities of the plain,' he had fancied himself not only more merciful, but more just, and ended his remonstrance with this protest, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' But even then he had recoiled in deep humility from that presumption. Now, however, he is wiser at once. The vision and knowledge of God by faith has grown upon him to that sweet perfection that not a word or thought of the kind appears when, as now, there was more occasion. The message seems to have come to him, as usual, in his sleep at night. At once this account follows: 'And Abraham arose up early in the morning, . . . and took . . . Isaac his son,' etc. And so the story goes on with his obedience, until, at the instant of sacrifice, 'the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven,' and saved Isaac from death.

The more I reflect upon this, the plainer it is to me that all the lofty lesson of *faith* in these examples from Abel to the Christian martyrs was meant to teach us that direct, unreserved, loving obedience to God's *Commandments*—that is, His Will expressed to us in *words*—is the greatest goodness in us. But especially this event in the life of 'the father of the faithful' tells us that the words of God must

be promptly obeyed even *against* what we call our reason, our 'eternal principles of right,' our 'moral sense,' or 'dictates of conscience.' All these are liable to be—*are*, in fact, in some degree—the echoes of our own cogitations. We can never tell how much of them is ignorance, pride of party or of opinion, prejudice, self-will, or secret selfishness. He who loves God with all his heart, or in degree as any one of us does, will joyfully set aside all these to do anything which God *says*, and he will not refuse to believe plain words to that effect on account of any such thoughts of his own. His very mistakes in practice thus—if there were such—would be more virtuous than another's correctness by the opposite method.

Will you say that this is fanaticism?—for thus did the man of Massachusetts who murdered his child five years ago; and so have done all the cruel self-torturers and persecutors of others in the name of Religion. Not so. That would be as if any good act was not good if any madman did what he said was in imitation of it. Perversely to disobey God in evil passion of any kind, and then to say that it was done by His commandment, would be a terrible sin, which He will judge. But is a disobedience any the less such because we say that we followed the 'dictates of conscience'?

Alas! it is because we have not enough of this intrepid faith in God that so many good people are afraid to stand firmly by what is the plain teaching of His Word, and to which all that is best in our reason does respond, that simply to do His *words* and *Will* is the loftiest range of goodness in us of thought or act. Even Mr. Matthew Arnold, to whom in his attempt to pull down all real Religion and yet preserve a 'literary' admiration of the Bible, and profit by its lessons of 'conduct,' this conscience-worship is much more suitable than to Christians, forgets himself in the power of that truth, and quotes (see *Lit. and Dogma*) with admiration that saying of Our Lord: 'If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the Commandments.*' Here, and in all the other sayings of that Teacher, there is not the slightest suggestion that we are to approve the Commandments of God because they require that which we otherwise know to be good. The whole tenor of His doctrine, and of His example for us, is that

these things are good because they *are* God's *commandments*,—that is, statements of His *Will* for us. To be sure Mr. Arnold does elsewhere make much of the occurrence of the word *conscience* in our English Bible. But none of those whom he so often ridicules for their metaphysical phrases, their 'literary inexperience,' and consequent want of 'tact' in understanding the Scripture writers, was ever guilty of greater blundering than he is in this instance. He ought to know (for I will not suppose that he purposely misrepresents this) that *συνείδησις* never meant in Greek writing what he thus makes of it, never meant anything but consciousness, or the knowledge of our own thoughts, or reflection upon these, and self-judgment. So I challenge him or any one else to produce a single instance in the Holy Bible when this *conscience* is given as the highest test of truth about God and our duty.

It will be generally allowed in our day that this best man of his time then did not understand his duty to his fellow-men as well as any Christian may now, since he was both an owner of slaves and the husband of more than one wife. This is another proof of what has been shown before, that, so far from the light of true Religion growing brighter among the true worshippers in all points, by steady development from the first, it rather suffered a diminution in some things. This is another of the facts which we must not quarrel with or deny, but 'receive with meekness.' Indeed it is a fact that Abraham is the first polygamist after the Flood of whom we have certain historical knowledge, though it is quite probable that he had seen the like in the harem of Pharaoh. Hagar, indeed, was an Egyptian slave, whom very likely Sarah had received as a present from that king, and brought her with them on their return to Canaan. Perhaps even the chiefs of that land, so sensual otherwise, had their many wives, though we have no mention of it.

For this (nor for slavery) no direct censure is passed upon him in the Scripture history. But on the other hand, it is plain from all that history, and, if we could doubt that, Our Lord's words about 'the beginning' are decisive to the same effect—that this was not the original idea of marriage. In doing this also the patriarch acts according to his own will (at his wife's suggestion), and without asking counsel of God.

The consequences are also at once unhappy. The glory and happiness which God has promised are not promoted, but rather hindered. A first-born child by the new wife is not the son of promise and the ancestor of the holy people who are to be, but a wild, lawless man, who marries heathen women (himself a polygamist, as Isaac *never* was), and whose descendants became in after ages, and are to this day (witness the latest events in Egypt and Arabia) the fiercest persecutors of the Church of God. [Here it seems worthy of notice that it is a careless error to suppose all Arabs, or even all Bedouins, to be descendants of Ishmael. These Ishmaelites doubtless became the governing element of all those tribes, mingled with them all by marriage and blood, furnishing them with their leaders (as Mohammed many ages after), and so *representing* all the Arabians. But under that collective name were included Amalekites, Midianites, and others, also descendants of Abraham (by Keturah), Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites, and some of Hamitic descent in S.-E. Arabia—one people as to language, made up of little independent tribes of wandering, pastoral, and plundering Bedouins—along with some communities of agricultural and even seafaring people on the shores of the Red and Indian Seas.]

Thus they are quite mistaken in fact, and are with their imagined 'scientific' treatment of the Divine history only constructing new and gratuitous perplexities for faith, who assume a constant progress of *evolution* of what God has been pleased to say to mankind of their duty, from the very first of it until the perfect 'Light of the World.' On the contrary here, in Abraham's case, was *retrogression* as to thoughts of what a man should do and be from the time when he was made perfect in 'the image,' or even from what good men knew of this long after the fall from that. For instance, Enoch's life was nearer that primitive truth than Abraham's.

So also in those earliest ages there is no sign of such a thing as one man's owning another, who was as much his rightful property, which another must not covet from him, as 'his ox, or his ass, or *anything that is his.*' Nor is the proof of this *merely* negative—the failure of such a brief history of 2000 years to note what was otherwise probable. What I

assert is altogether natural, since all mankind were then of the same honourable birth and blood. It alone accords with the primitive law of love. How, then, came this new thing to be? Of that we really *know* nothing. We may fairly conjecture, but that is all.

And such conjecture will be wise and trustworthy just so far as it is founded upon, or at least is not contradictory of, the truth from God. From the very days of Cain, as the earth began to be 'filled with violence,' we can suppose this slavery a natural enough result of bold violence joined with cunning, and yielded to by the growing timidity of some submitting to the fierceness of the others, instead of resisting with equal violence. Yet, in the same way, we must suppose that there was none of this oppression among those of the holy line of faith, from Abel to Noah. Certainly slavery did not cross the Flood, if it had existed before, for none of our kind came out of the ark but the one man, and his sons, and their wives.

Yet here, in ten generations more, we find the good Abraham moving into his new country with flocks and herds, and also slaves—men and women who were his servants, not freely for hire, but belonging to him as property. Somehow, and at some time in that interval, it had begun to be common—not only among bad men and tribes of false religion, but with the best—to own some of their fellow-men, and for these to consider themselves the property of the others. The thought was so fixed on the side of the slaves, as well as of the masters, that it required no force of cruel punishment to secure this service, nor vigilance to prevent escape. And, on the other hand, the slave did not complain or resist. This was evidently so in the case of a good master, like Abraham. Doubtless among the cruel Babylonian or Egyptian nobles and other pagan masters, there was, on the part of many of them, fierce sensuality and passionate, impatient, and unjust anger, even to wanton cruelty; and on the part of the slaves every sort of attempt at escape, or of evading their tasks by lies or other contrivances. How slavery began among bad men is easy enough to conjecture, but why it should have prevailed among men of the pure Religion is not readily seen. No doubt it came on by slow steps through several genera-

tions. Perhaps at first, as the pure patriarchal chieftainship of one man over his descendants passed into a larger government, some men of different inferior tribes became attached to the stronger tribe by hire, or by helpless dependence upon the rich and compassionate. Then they or their children not unwillingly sunk into the permanent condition of dependants upon the opulent and good, sure of food and needful clothing and shelter, choosing this rather than to share the poverty of their own kindred with independence. Some may have wisely made this choice to keep within the true Religion, and away from persecutions or temptations to which they would have been subject in their own tribe. So their children, 'born in the house' of the master, grew up as such inferiors, and accepted this for their lot as a matter of course—to be the slaves of Abraham rather than free tribesmen among the Pagans. Who can wisely say that this was an ignoble choice? that it was not rather the exact opposite? And besides these there were others—perhaps all of a good man's slaves at first—who were 'bought with his money' from others who had taken them captive in predatory war. If such a thought as of then dismissing them free to their own homes could have entered his mind, it might have been utterly impossible or most unkind. It was certainly no little gain for these men to pass over to such a master. There can be—for there often has been in this relation—the most just and careful affection for the inferiors, and devoted, grateful love in their service, as we see in the later law of Moses, and in the echo, long after, of the Divine Epistles (Exod. xxv. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 1, etc.).

We shall all now agree in thinking that slavery is not the most perfect instance of the law of love to our neighbour. But is any actual social arrangement which we know of now, even in our most Christian lands? For my own part, I do not doubt that any one of Abraham's slaves was more happy and noble—even more free—than any member of a tribe of Pagan Bedouins then or since; or even than many poor neighbours of ours now, who have to put up with such a wretched, toilsome, and anxious living as the very unequal division of possessions now enforces. When the Saviour of the world has come to judge it in righteousness, this will no longer be so. Now that He has come to teach us such lessons



of humility and love, it ought not to be so. But Abraham was then perhaps a better neighbour to these dependants than we sometimes are to our fellow-Christians. In this very generation there were *some* African slaves in one part of my own country who were living a happier and better life, and were treated more according to that law of love by their Christian masters and mistresses, than some were by their neighbours (of their own blood and race) in another part of the country where slavery was regarded as the worst outrage upon human right.

So let us simply accept the *fact* that it had already come to be allowed among all men that one could have the same right of property in a fellow-man that he had in his beasts of burden, with this qualification, however, that with good men this did not impair the sacredness of all human life or dispense with the duties of justice and kindness.

All we have of this history for the next four or five hundred years is very briefly told. Every incident is interesting, and deserves much study in its place. But for our purpose we must confine ourselves to a few of them which have the most direct bearing upon the progress of Religion both true and false. The first of these is the flight of Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family, from Sodom, at the destruction of the 'cities of the plain.' These survivors took refuge in a mountain fastness at no great distance. Lot himself had during his residence in the wicked city used some expostulations with his neighbours as to their conduct. But he seemed to have been more successful in keeping their false religion and bad morals out of his own house. Yet some of his daughters had married men of Sodom, and become like them. Two, however, remained at home unmarried. So while their elder sisters, though with their husbands sharing in the gracious warning, did not believe it and escape, these, with their father and mother, made their way out of the city in time. Yet even in spite of this terrific judgment upon such things before their eyes, and their own narrow escape, these wretched young women almost outdid the Sodomites in their profane impurity. Their father's steadfast piety for himself, and other care of them, could not prevent the natural result of his rashness in choosing, for whatever worldly advantage, to

live among such a people. (Abraham escapes from such danger at any sacrifice.) The wicked ways of Sodom had penetrated somehow even into the seclusion of these young virgins,—perhaps by the visits and conversation of their married sisters.<sup>1</sup> And so in this awful solitude of their salvation from that ‘fiery overthrow,’—in the mountain cave where Lot would now rather crouch than have the society of any fellow-men, their governing thought was, not of loving and obeying the All-seeing God, but—of doing ‘after the manner of all the earth.’ So they too became one of the terrible examples of such degradation, and two more tribes of Pagans were to be added to the Canaanites.

There is another accession to false religion, even from Abraham’s family. Hagar’s son, Ishmael, as we have already noticed, goes off among the wild tribes of the desert, marries wives, and becomes a chief and patriarch of a long line of Arabs. So do the sons of Keturah, whom Abraham marries after Sarah’s death. Isaac alone remains the true fruit and germ of ‘the holy people.’ And he is also a faultless example (better in this than his great father) of pure and primitive marriage to ‘the wife of his youth’ ‘until death them do part,’ and until his own death. Yet even from him a branch shoots off, in his first-born, Esau, to increase (by the Edomites) the vast hosts of false religion.

The story of Jacob, the other son, as the heir of the great promise, is told to us with masterly picturesqueness and simplicity. Yet he does not at all appear in it as a perfect man. It is a strange thing how some Christians now receive this quite impatiently, and are much disgusted with the patriarch’s supplanting of his high-spirited (and yet really low-minded) brother, and his outwitting his very mean and unjust father-in-law, as if they were sure that *they* would be described by such a perfect pen as quite superior persons to him—of which I am much in doubt. Would they—do they—have as much intrepid *faith* in the Unseen God and His promises, while all around is so much against this?

<sup>1</sup> Probably in that way the fear of God as to such sin, and the shame of true modesty, had become to them as much a ‘narrow prejudice’ and ridiculous ‘prudery’ as to any physiologico-moralist of our time. They would have admired M. Renan for saying, ‘Les frivoles ont peut-être raison.’

This faith sustains him in a lonely journey on foot across strange lands and desert tracts to kinsmen whom he had never seen, or probably heard from ; and through this exile from father and mother for twenty years. The false religion had evidently been gaining upon the true among his kinsmen, for the seventy years since his mother left them, a betrothed virgin. Yet he did not yield to that powerful influence, but probably rather brought back the holy worship among them. Certainly he did 'command his household and his children after him' in this. His young wives did not, as with the others from Ishmael to Esau, impose their false religion upon him or upon their children. And God blesses and speaks to him as His true servant, and at last commands him to return to his father and the land of promise.<sup>1</sup>

Then as the next generation comes up we have, instead of one child through whom the holy people are to continue, one family of twelve sons, with very various characters. Two of these are much the most prominent in the history—Judah and Joseph. In them all we see that order of the human nature which God has given us, by which the varieties of character pass from father to son, or sometimes strangely leaping over the intermediate links, reappear in the grandson or a yet later generation. At the same time, this is not by some 'reign of law,' as the tendency of thinking is in our age, which is thus made really the absolute sovereign ; but as a part of God's usual Will, while He is entirely free to do otherwise than in this usual way (more so than we ever are in our most simple acts of choice) as He chooses, and so in fact does upon some occasions.<sup>2</sup> By events altogether outside of human choice or forethought, and by spiritual grace acting directly upon the individual soul, each of us is before Him as 'clay is in the potter's hand' (Jer. xviii. 6)—even far more at His disposal than this or any figure of our speech can

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noticed that it is not only as to sincerity and generous fairness in his dealings that Jacob fails in the good life of true Religion. But he falls back from the good example of his father as to marriage (though perhaps at first it was not his fault that Rachel did not become to him just what Rebekah was to Isaac)—even fell further below this than his noble grandfather, and so became, as it were, an authority and example of polygamy for all his descendants.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Reign of God*—not *The Reign of Law* (*passim*) for a very full discussion, and, I think, unanswerable proof of this.

describe. So also, on the other hand, evil desire and spiritual temptation yielded to by any of us may aggravate inherited faults of character, or supplant like characteristics of the better kind.

This mystery is no less a truth that we cannot possibly fathom it by our reasonings. The denial of it is really most incomprehensible and irrational. Nor is it against the truth of Divine love, but a great and necessary part of that. It is really denying that God is love to deny this, for love implies free-will, to which that sort of 'law' in either 'the natural or spiritual world' is contradictory. So, both as to the rational possibility and its imagined opposition to Divine goodness, the one conclusive answer in behalf of His Word is: 'Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?' Let this be our refuge of truth when any intrusion of 'Philosophy' into these things, as against God's Word in teaching us Religion, at all disturbs the quietness and strength of our faith in it.

Thus Judah seems to have had more of the openness and nobleness of his great-grandfather Abraham than his father, or even than *appears* in what we know of his grandfather. Yet he is most unlike to them all in occasional bursts of low passions, which are far more like a Pagan Canaanite than one of the chosen people of the One True and Holy God. As the Divine History, corresponding to the Divine Providence, tells nothing amiss, we should learn from this that the chosen seed was often to degenerate instead of developing in increasing excellence as the many generations succeeded one another through the wonderful interval from Abraham to 'the Last Adam.' As a great instance of this, it was through this very line of the impure Judah, instead of the chaste Joseph, that the glorious Son of Man was to derive His human generation.

Thus was the evil example around always conspiring with the 'old man' of evil passion, contending against the new life of God's grace in those who are thus *again* His children *by adoption*, and with the toil and craft of the unseen evil ones. The Church has always seen in these pictures and examples of its history, and so of the trials and vicissitudes of each of its members, one purpose of God in this

long and wonderful history that leads up to the Advent of the Lord, to illustrate that history and our individual life. Even before Judah's folly, Reuben, the first-born, had been a shocking example of base animal passion—in his case that of the thoughtless and 'impulsive' sort of men, who commonly pass for 'generous.' Thus he follows 'Nature' in a way which even most Pagans have supposed to be basely unnatural.

The cruel violence of Simeon and Levi in the affair of their sister Dinah has some relief in showing that the nobler ideas of human virtue were not with them altogether benumbed by that dreadful downward tendency of our earthly life, though it had gone so far among all the people around them. Alas for any people who are the Canaanites of our day, no matter how scientific, literary, or civilised they may be, or how unscientific and ridiculous the contrary scruples may appear to them! In all Christendom this is really the most loathsome and deadly ulcer of society, not only among so-called 'low people,' but as it is disguised and stimulated among all who read, palliated and aggravated by poetry, romance, wit, and 'biology,' which is sure that the only *raison d'être* of one-half of mankind, and the really main and most enduring purpose of existence of the other, around which all else revolves, is the succession of generations on this earth. So entirely has this notion taken possession of one of the most intellectual nations of Christendom (and the others seem only saved from it so far by the power of Religion) that M. Renan, who appears to be himself in this particular one of the rare men of his people in self-mastered virtue, admits to the profligate that 'Nature cares nothing for chastity,' and that perhaps these 'triflers are right' in their contempt for all religious scruples of the kind! (See Matthew Arnold in *Nineteenth Century*, 1884.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I rejoice in according to Mr. Arnold my admiration and thanks for this powerful protest against a tendency of thought so fatal to all that is noble in man. His Christian education stands him in good stead in having fixed in his own character such virtuous wisdom both of thought and conduct. But if he could succeed in his attempt to pull down true religious faith in his own country, there would soon be at least as much brutal lasciviousness in England as in France.

From a child Joseph shows a superior character, and excites envy and dislike in his brothers by this, or perhaps rather by the notice which their father takes of it. The so well-known story of his being sold by them into slavery in Egypt is told by Moses with a beauty and tenderness which no paraphrase of mine could approach. Nor is this needed here for our purpose. For that we only observe the Syrian boy as the house-slave of an Egyptian noble, quietly keeping to his religion of love and service to the Only God. He could not but be amazed and impressed by the lofty temples and splendid ceremonies of the Egyptian religion, and its absolute power over him for comfort and safety—even for life or death. Such a thought as that of saying or doing anything of opposition to this vast and terrible power probably did not enter his mind, though all he had learned at home suggested horror of the image-worship, the ‘gods many,’ and the gloomy superstitions. He may even have had in his master’s service to take some part in those rites. But nothing is plainer than that he quietly continued in the religion of his father. For to say ‘The Lord was with Joseph’ (Gen. xxxix. 2, 3, 21, 23), and the like, involves the meaning, ‘Joseph served the Lord.’ And on this account the Lord blessed the Egyptian heathen Potiphar, his master, and all his affairs, as if *he* had been the true worshipper, as has been not seldom His gracious way of showing favour to a whole family from love to the humblest member of it.

And now from this very prosperity befell Joseph a greater trial, and yet also, as not seldom happens, a greater blessing of the God Who is most loving to those who love Him, than the former prosperity. His master’s wife, with the idle passionateness of many of the women of high rank in her country, took a vicious fancy to the Hebrew slave. This handsome young fellow, going quietly about the house, with such faithfulness and good judgment as had won all her husband’s confidence, seemed just the opportunity for an exciting intrigue, such as she had perhaps read of in the novels of the time, or talked of with those of her set in their eager gossip and scandal. So she let him know her thoughts, and that so repeatedly and so plainly that he could not have shrunk from

the temptation merely from fear of being misled into fatal presumption by his own vanity or passion. She was doubtless astonished, but not at first overcome in her purpose, by his positive and persevering refusal. And what he said to her (though his conduct in this affair has ever since been one of the greatest jests of '*les frivoles*,' and alas! also of such Christians as are more afraid of being despised as 'prudish' than they are of Joseph's mind about these things) is the noblest saying of the kind that ever fell from the lips of sinful man: 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Nothing shows more plainly the purity of true Religion than that he does not think of the danger to himself, or the real dishonour to her, but speaks of the wrong done to another—not merely of her infamous and dangerous treachery to a confiding husband, but of his own to a kind and trusting superior, yet most of all—what is always the greatest thing in this,—its disobedience to that Holy One Who is the Lord of true love, and is Love itself.

This true Religion of humble and penitent faith in God is maintained by Joseph in the further, and in some respects yet greater, trial of his piety being apparently now rewarded by a most wicked, false accusation, his master's change from such favour before to violent rage and disgust, putting him into a loathsome prison with criminals, at first in chains and fetters (Ps. cv. 18), and doubtless by his being to all appearance in great danger of instant punishment by death. That this last did not befall him can hardly be accounted for but by doubt on the part of Potiphar whether Joseph's firm and quiet denial of any guilt was not the truth—the falsehood and guilt to be looked for in another quarter. His piety, patience, gentleness, and fidelity in whatever is committed to his care soon wins for the prisoner the same favour from a hard jailor that they had in the slave from his powerful master. He becomes just such a trusted manager of everything in the prison as he had been in Potiphar's house. He continues still, by the loving goodness of God to him, to love and serve that 'Lord' in all things, and receives the same gracious reward from Him of favour with men.<sup>1</sup>

How long his imprisonment lasted we do not know, but

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxix. 21-23.

when two men of high rank were sent to this place under great displeasure of the Pharaoh, and there to await his will of life or death, they were placed in Joseph's care as their attendant. And when they knew that the king's birthday was close at hand, and their fate likely then to be adjudged by him, they both had dreams, which seemed to them to foretell that fate—but whether favourably or unfavourably they could not decide. Dreaming is certainly one of the most wonderful things of our nature. Physical science cannot give the least account of it. It is therefore not at all strange that superstition has been much engaged about dreams in all ages and nations; and those who try to overreach others by means of superstitious fear have used them among their chief opportunities. Nor has the regard to dreams been by any means lessened by mere civilisation or by worldly irreligiousness. On the contrary, true Religion is the only thing which has ever really delivered men (through loving confidence in God and His Word) from irrational attention to their own or others' dreams.

But, on the other hand, that Religion plainly informs us that God has upon some occasions made use of dreams to communicate with men through His prophets. Thus with Joseph himself, long before, as a pure and devout boy—though these prophetic dreams, while impressing all the more religious who heard of them at the time, were not really believed in or remembered until their great fulfilment long after. It is as unreasonable to deny this on account of the prevalent superstitions about dreams as it is to disbelieve any other of the Divine miracles<sup>1</sup> because there have been 'lying wonders' of false religion, or because it is foolish to believe everything a miracle which we do not understand. Unless we accept the absurdity of Atheism for truth, it is common sense for us to believe without questioning whatever God tells us—of *how* He is pleased to tell us anything. If it be by an audible voice from the sky, we are not to doubt that, because some artful impostor has pretended such wonders, or some superstitious multitude mistaken a peal of thunder for a voice from Heaven. Whether it be a dream of the prophet of God, or

<sup>1</sup> For example, because every other instance of a burning bush was probably caused in a natural way, so was that which Moses saw at Mount Horeb.



the prophetic interpretation of another's dream, it is the same.

In this case it was none the less the word of God by the prophet Joseph, whether the dreams of the chief butler and the chief baker were ordinary dreams, which might have occurred if no devout young Joseph had been their fellow-prisoner. It was when he, with his true faith in the True One, whether by conscious or unconscious inspiration for the occasion, said to them: 'Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you,' that we know this was from Him. No doubt they knew that the young Syrian slave was very religious, in a different way from them—though how far they understood that by the word 'God' (*Elohim*, with its plural form in his dialect, which they understood, or in a corresponding Egyptian word which he used) he did not mean the 'many gods' of their worship, but the One Only real Divine, of Whom, too, they had some thought (see p. 286), we have no suggestion. They could not but recognise his beautiful purity of conduct in all things, as well as this loving sympathy in their anxieties of the poor, friendless victim of injustice. This gave them confidence in all he said, and even a certain reverence for him.

That, of course, was much increased in all who knew of this affair when, three days after, upon the high day looked for, Joseph's interpretation was exactly fulfilled. One of the two was restored by the king to his place of honour, and the other executed. But what a wonderful touch of the usual human nature (as in all the rest) there is in the incident that the fortunate man never gave a thought afterward to the noble-minded Joseph! And yet when the latter had turned the other's dreadful apprehensions into such hope by his explanation of the dream, he had expressly added: 'But think on me when it shall be well with thee; . . . and make mention of me unto Pharaoh. . . . For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.'<sup>1</sup>

But after two more years in the sad 'dungeon,' there were two other miraculous dreams. This time it was the mighty and dreaded Pharaoh himself who was the dreamer.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xl. 14.

Twice in one night, with an interval of waking, did he have very striking dreams, which were quite alike and yet quite unlike,—their very absurdity and unreality, such as is wont in dreams, seeming to suggest a great reality beneath them. It is certain that in fact, by the Will of God, they were to bring to pass great events as to His chosen people for the preservation of true Religion.<sup>1</sup> But neither the king nor his 'wise men' could at all guess the great meaning which he was sure did lie in them. Was this anxiety of his mere superstition? and would he have done wisely, as the science and reason of our time would say with entire positiveness, to give his dreams no thought?

Surely we who adhere to the true Religion cannot say that. Yet this faith of ours must be in exact opposition to the belief in a 'reign of law,' which is now the prevailing fashion of thought. For no one can suggest the most remote connection of cause or of indication between the dreams of the king and the risings of the Nile for the next fourteen years, or any other natural occasions of fertility or famine in Egypt for that time. Thus, according to science, he was all wrong in wishing to have his dreams interpreted; according to the Word of God, he was right.

It was in the midst of this trouble, and out of the utter failure of 'all the wisdom of the Egyptians' to meet it, that the chief butler bethought himself of Joseph, and of his wonderful interpretation of dreams in the prison. The whole scene at the Court of Pharaoh is wonderfully lifelike, and is in all its details 'corroborated,'<sup>2</sup> as we would say, by what has been learned of late years from the pictures and other remains of the Egyptian monuments. The great officer's lucky recalling of what took place in the prison, his adroit account of it to the king, the instant summons of the Hebrew slave and prisoner, his prompt appearance (and yet

<sup>1</sup> It is really gratuitous folly for men at any time to be sure that any given event is *not* a part of the Will of God. What do we know of the details of that Will (according to His love) which authorises such positiveness of ours? Both our deepest reflection and much in His Word suggests the contrary. But certainly what He tells us as such is certainly His Will.

<sup>2</sup> Though to one who believes as I do, without reserve, that this is the Word of God, it is these monuments, and still more our understanding of them, which rather need explanation and corroboration by it.

not without due care as to his appearance) before the absolute, dreaded Pharaoh, himself adored as a 'god,' yet now troubled and angry at these menacing dreams and the failure of all his philosophers and priests to interpret them.<sup>1</sup> Nothing can be further from either artifice or presumption or from barbarous superstition, on the part of the young Syrian, as compared with all these 'cultured' people, than Joseph's instant reply to the king's demand, 'I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it'—'It is not in me : *God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.'

Then as soon as the king has related his dreams the conscious prophet of the Almighty replies at once: 'God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.' And then proceeding to explain that the two dreams mean one prophecy about the next fourteen years—the first seven of great plenty, to be followed by as many of cruel scarcity,—he adds his advice about this, which had not been asked (and therefore this would usually have been taken for great presumption in the poor slave), but which was evidently to them all as much the Word of God to the king of Egypt as the solution of the dreams. 'And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt,' etc.,—this great officer to have the power and responsibility of storing up during the years of plenty what would be otherwise wasted, and thus saving the whole people from starving in the terrible seven years of famine that were to follow.

So far from taking offence at this gratuitous counsel of the poor young stranger in the highest matters of state, to the king and lords of great Egypt, they were all struck with awe and admiration of him. There may have been something in his voice, air, and attitude, as well as the mighty aptness of his words to the whole matter, which revealed him to them as a messenger of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet

<sup>1</sup> There is a striking resemblance between this scene and that of Daniel summoned before Belshazzar to read the handwriting upon the wall, as it also has a parallel in that of the later Pharaoh and his 'magicians' around him for a while with some success imitating the miracles of Moses.

doubtless the severe simplicity and modesty of his words were reflected in his manner—neither of them however the less grand for that.<sup>1</sup> ‘And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we *find* such a one as *this* is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?’ Then, turning to him, ‘Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as *thou* art: *thou* shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.’ At once he puts upon him all the insignia of a royal vicegerent, and commands shouts of acclamation to him, which were doubtless rendered by all the Court and people with all their hearts.

The most astonished person was no doubt Joseph himself. But we may be quite sure that he bore it throughout with the same strong calmness and quiet, loving faith in God as he had kept in his cruel exile and slavery, and even in the dungeon awaiting death. He goes at once into his vast, royal work with the same faithfulness to these duties as to the slave’s—with none of the foolish elation nor of the fierce insolence of fortunate youth,—but ‘*servi*ng the *Lord* (Whom he loved, and Who loved him) with all *humility*.’

This was one of the great triumphs of true Religion over superstition, upon its own strongest ground. The rich, lettered land of Egypt is saved from most fearful calamities by wisdom from God given to a Syrian slave, who quietly adheres to that Religion in the face of the greatest difficulties. This wisdom of God, as soon as uttered before a great assembly—more representing the wealth and wisdom of this world as ‘enmity to God’ than anything then upon earth,—commends itself as true to all the listeners by its solution of the threatening mystery, and its insight and foresight of what must be done. All these proud men of false Religion—and foremost he who is one of its ‘gods’—bow before the word of the Only True God, and accept His grace to them as offered,—not indeed in ‘turning from these vanities’ of their worship and belief, for that ‘fulness of time’ was yet far

<sup>1</sup> Can any one who has become at all familiar with the *Egyptian style* in the inscriptions, papyrus writings, etc., fail to notice the entirely *non-Egyptian* style of Joseph, and in great measure of Moses, long after? Nothing fictitious, nothing of mere human authorship could have done this.

off,—but in this deliverance from a dreadful danger, yet seven years away.

Here is another of the great lessons for us in these days of the History of Religion. It shows the falseness of one of the popular notions—at least in my own country—that ‘every man is the architect of his own fortune.’<sup>1</sup> It is true that God allots<sup>2</sup> to different men various powers suited to various action. But what right have we to be so sure that men always succeed according to those natural powers and their own will? Do we know that it is only the seeds which germinate that ever had original fertility? Do not a thousand facts indicate the contrary, and show also that some of the greatest powers of mind and will are by Him allotted to a life of obscure humility and patience in this world (or of obscurity without these virtues, if we are so unwise and unhappy as not to take His Will in that way)?

So when a man does rise to great power and fame, this is evidently always brought about by various events with which he has nothing to do, any of which taking another turn, his career would have been quite different—no matter what his force of talents or of will. The actual result is evidently the doing of Him Who not only gave him those powers, but brought about those events, to Whom all is due. ‘What hast thou that thou didst not *receive*?’

Joseph was indeed great in wisdom—the wisdom both of judgment and of conduct,—disposing others to commit their affairs to him, great or small, and giving him success in those trusts. But the best part of that wisdom was his humble patience and trust in God for all things. His good sense, firmness, purity, and diligence were all steps to his exaltation. Yet they would never have made him the great man of Egypt, or anything more than a Syrian chief like his brothers, unless there had been these other steps,—the dreadful cruelty of those brothers, the baseness of his master’s wife, the displeasure of Pharaoh with the two courtiers, and God’s warning that king of the coming famine.

<sup>1</sup> Thus one of our great orators (Mr. Wirt), himself really wiser as a humble Christian, renders an old Roman saying, ‘*Quisque faber suæ fortunæ,*’ into the actual language of the thoughts of the emulous and self-confident of our people.

<sup>2</sup> No doubt as much according to ‘general laws’ as the other things, yet all alike by His absolute personal Will.

We have now an instance of the contact of the false and true religions even more interesting than that of Abraham's short residence in Egypt (p. 286). The contact is in some respects much closer. For Joseph was now no mere sojourning stranger, whose religion might pass at most unnoticed, as Abraham's probably had (and his own even more obscurely until now). He was a great person of state,—practically the greatest, so far as actual contact with all classes of the people went. He was also now allied by marriage to the priestly nobility. Yet there is no suggestion in the History that he joined in the religion of the country. Perhaps that first awe of him as a prophet of his God, by Whose warning this salvation from famine was being prepared, and was afterwards accomplished, remained, to cause them all, from the Pharaoh down, to respect his firm and quiet Religion, and leave him entirely to it in his own family.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime he goes on about his great work with his habitual patience, diligence, and practical wisdom. And this work, no doubt, with that great, steady, heroic faith in God, which could have been maintained only by constant prayer and worship and loving *service* of Him in all things, kept him from the sad longings after his father's face and house, by which his tender and constant heart would otherwise have been overpowered.

When the days of famine came, Syrian faces began to mingle with those of the Egyptians who came to buy food. For the same causes had made sore famine in the other

<sup>1</sup> The later incident of the cup, 'in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth' (Gen. xlv. 5), is not opposed to this, as implying his following the superstitions of Egypt as to magic, etc. Joseph did not so describe the cup in his first command to the steward (ver. 2), as he would have most naturally done, if that were his real thought. This was meant to heighten the anxiety and terror of the brothers. Perhaps Joseph intended to keep up this illusion, in saying to them when Benjamin is brought before him as the detected thief, 'Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?' (ver. 15), overpowering them also thus with the power over them for life and death of Egypt's strange religion. But this does not tell us that it was his belief. For the very word (אֱדִינֶה), there rendered 'divine,' had another altogether innocent sense, as used by Laban once, and well translated in our Bible: 'For I have *learned by experience* that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake' (Gen. xxx. 27). It meant at first and in general to *find out*, but came later (as the very word *divine* in English has reversed this process) to be limited to superstitious, and therefore unlawful, searchings and findings of the future, in false religions.

lands far and near, and which had neither the vast fertility of former Egyptian harvests to fall back upon, nor still less any wise Joseph as a prophet of God to foretell, and as a minister of God to prepare for, the coming evil. When the first of these Syrians came down to Egypt, did Joseph look wistfully to see whether he could recognise any of the faces, or long to ask if any one of them knew aught of Jacob, the rich patriarch in Canaan?

At last that, to wait for which was perhaps a part of his lot as God's prophet, came to pass. With the wise thoroughness and careful justice in all details which belonged to his wonderful wisdom, he attended in person to all sales of bread-corn from the public storehouses. So when one day ten foreigners appeared, and with the great demonstrations of honour awarded by all to this mighty personage, 'bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth,' he instantly knew them for his brothers. Those twenty years had made little difference in them. But nothing in the lofty bearing of the great Egyptian lord, of whose more than human wisdom and great power the fame had come through all the land around, reminded them of the beautiful, trembling boy whom they sold to the Bedouin slave-merchants long ago. Whoever reads this now may do well to pause and imagine for a while what were then the thoughts and emotions of Joseph.

For our object we must rather imitate the silence of the Divine History as to this, only noting, as it does, that as he saw the profound reverence of their salutations, he recalled those *dreams* about the sheaves and the stars, and that shout of theirs once: 'Behold, this dreamer cometh!'<sup>1</sup>

All that occurs from this on until he finally makes himself known to them is a wonderful mixture (told with exquisite simplicity and naturalness) of human emotions and conduct,—on the noblest, and yet also on the imperfect, side of our common nature, in which Joseph appears to us as one of the best and greatest of men, and yet is still a man 'of like passions' and imperfections with us all; this mingled with the inspiration of God as one of His prophets, both to know and to do great things in the history of the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxvii. 5-11.

true Religion. It is thus one of the chief of those examples of conduct provided for us in the Book of God.

Nor is it only *Joseph's* example of generous and tender love, and yet firmness, self-control, and endurance in all *duty* of inducing and of testing the genuine 'repentance and better minds' of the others. This deep repentance, humility, love and sorrow for their father in his grief, and respect for his preference of the surviving favourite, the youngest son, Joseph's own brother,—these are beautiful examples for us. And among them Judah is pre-eminent in that eloquence of sympathetic love for their father and ready sacrifice of himself to save Benjamin in which it all culminates, when Joseph cries to all the Egyptian attendants, 'Cause every man to go out,' and is left alone with them to overwhelm them at once with awe, wonder, shame, and joy, when the great prince—to whom Judah had just acknowledged in utter submission, and waiting upon his lips for their fate, 'Thou art even as Pharaoh'—bursts into weeping, and says, '*I am Joseph.*'

The chief matter for us to note is that Religion is the main thing in all these transactions. It may be that at the first interview with his brothers some resentful sense of justice sharpened Joseph's words, when he accused the strangers of being spies, and to their alarmed protestations and explanation of their home-life (which was just what he wanted to hear something of, but could not venture any direct questions of his own, for fear of setting them to observe and recognise him) answered that he would test this by having them produce that younger brother, who they said had been left at home. So when—after they had been kept in prison for three days, and were brought before him again—he announces that he will mitigate his first judgment of sending one of them home for the youngest, and keeping the other nine as prisoners and hostages, by detaining one and releasing the others, he gives this as his reason for the milder sentence, 'I fear God.'

It was perhaps a check to his own indignation, and an acknowledgment to himself that in all this he must simply do the Will of Him Who—as he was conscious, and as he himself soon after plainly declares (xlv. 5, 7, 8)—had appointed him by all these great events to preserve the sacred family



from perishing by famine, and to bring it into Egypt for greater things yet to be. But it was also a solemn pledge to them of truth and mercy in his exercise of his absolute power. It is the true, noble saying and thought for any man who has power over others. Yet this must have sounded rather strange to them from an Egyptian, who was not at all likely to qualify his conduct to them by regard to the Name which was sacred to them, unless they took it, as translated to them, to mean the 'gods many' of that land. What he overheard them say after this—though, as they supposed, not understood by the Egyptian magnate—showed him also that their Religion had set them to take this distress and danger for what it really was—God's call upon them to repent of their actual sins, especially of that dreadful one against their brother Joseph.

Then the nine brothers on their way home, finding their money returned, are struck with *religious* awe and fear, and say, 'What is this that *God* hath done to us?' When Jacob at last overcomes his fears for Benjamin, and sends again to Egypt, his hope is in this: 'And *God Almighty* give you mercy before the man.' Even the Egyptian steward (as instructed to *say* this, or as) having caught the spirit and usual sayings of his noble master, reassures the sons of Jacob about the money they found by replying to their account of it, 'Peace be unto you, fear not; *your God, and the God of your father*, hath given you treasure in your sacks.'

When the next agony of this trial of their spirit comes, and the nine elders, though conscious of their innocence in this, while not so certain that poor Benjamin may not have purloined the precious cup, yet taking it all for (what it was) what they had deserved for their cruelty to his mother's son twenty years ago, and *that* bereavement of their venerated father, make this submission through Judah as their spokesman—resolved to share the ignominy and slavery of their youngest brother, it is—'God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.' And therefore when Joseph puts the last test of their feeling, by refusing this, and adheres to punishing Benjamin alone, and sending them away free, Judah makes his very noble and beautiful speech, insisting upon sacrificing himself for his brother,—and then Joseph knows for certain

that this is true repentance of that past, not mere shame and sorrow as a sentiment, but 'repentance unto life,' of a 'new heart'—'repentance toward *God*' and *from God*.<sup>1</sup>

In the swift rush of feelings and words with which he discloses himself, declares his love and forgiveness, and with all tenderness reassures and consoles them in their alarm and shame, he says at once, and keeps repeating that truth in several of its aspects (Gen. xlv. 5-7): 'Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, . . . for *God* did *send* me before you to preserve life;' 'And *God* sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth,' etc.; 'So now, it was not you that sent me hither, *but God*,' etc.; and in his eager message of love to his father, entreating him to remove at once from that land of famine to one of plenty, 'Thus saith thy son Joseph, *God* hath made me lord of all Egypt,' etc. So Jacob, as soon as he recovers from the chill<sup>2</sup> of dread which the first announcement of such an incredible happiness sends over him, and consents to the summons, begins his journey with a most solemn act of worship, and with a vision and message *from God*—'I am God, the God of thy father: . . . fear not to go down into Egypt,' etc.

Arrived there, and presented at court to the king, the venerable Patriarch *blesses the king*—yet, as Holy Scripture says elsewhere (Heb. vii. 7), 'and without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better.' Whence, then, this silent acknowledgment by the greatest king in the world of the greatness of this old Hebrew chief? Most plainly from a religious awe of him, as a prophet of the One Unseen God (of Whom, as we have seen before (p. 287), even the Egyptians always had a sort of thought), the God of Joseph, through whom, as also being His prophet, their land was being saved from ruin. And this was Joseph's father and revered superior.

This presence of the true Religion in these events is also brought out, and a link of the faith of the Patriarchs to that of the Gospel disclosed (though this was afterwards for a long while, even in 'the commonwealth of Israel,' some-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 26—'And Jacob's heart fainted,' etc.

what lost to view) in some words of Jacob's answer to the king's question about his age: 'The days of the years of my *pilgrimage* . . . of my fathers in the days of *their pilgrimage*,' etc. (xlvii. 9). For no one who accepts the great truth (as shown, *supra*, Chap. IV.) that the Old Testament is to be understood throughout from the point of view of the New, can doubt that the writer in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 13) had this very saying of Jacob in his mind, and shows us what it meant for him and the other patriarchs. Thus though they could not have our clear vision of the 'life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel,' it was a plain part of their Religion to regard life in this world as only a pilgrim's journey toward his real residence after death. Observe this, too, in Jacob's joy and content when he first meets Joseph now, 'Now let me die,' etc. (xlvii. 30). Why this, if all he knew of or hoped for were our present life? Why not rather, 'Now let me *live*'?

Pharaoh is very gracious to Joseph's kindred, and offers them their choice of any lands in Egypt. But they do not traverse the country to find the richest fields in the fertile Nile valley. They halt and settle in the very district which they first enter,—a pleasant pastoral land, suited to shepherds and herdsmen, but not like the deep, damp soil of the delta and river-banks, which made Egypt so famous for fertility. Here Joseph at once counselled them to ask a home, frankly declaring that they knew only how to take care of sheep and cattle, though that was considered low business in Egypt. Whereupon the King bid them make themselves content in that 'land of Goshen' (or 'of Rameses'), if it suited them; and even had them put in charge of his own herds pastured in that region, instead of on the river-lands, which could not be spared for such inferior uses.

In this Joseph managed for them not only to avoid irritating the prejudices and envy of the Egyptian people in general, and that they might quietly observe their own Religion, but also, as a prophet of God, with the further thought that they would thus be best prepared for a future return to the land of His promises. That such a return to Canaan was never out of his mind or his father's we have plain proofs afterwards.

Seventeen years later, while he is still governing all Egypt with the wisdom and power which left marks of his administration upon that country for 1000 years, Jacob, drawing near to death, sends for his great son. The old patriarch speaks as a prophet of God, in gratitude and faith, and looks across the far future. He foresees that *nation* of Israel which is then to be the 'people of God' in the land of Canaan, each of his sons (Joseph's two sons being for this set upon a level with their father's brothers) the ancestor of a great 'tribe' of that people. As a mark of faith in this future, he requires that his body shall be carried at once for burial to Canaan, though they are all to return from this ceremony to Egypt, for their home of many generations yet.

Joseph not only sees that this is done with great pomp and reverence, but long afterwards, when he knew his own death to be not far off, repeats the prophecy of the return of the Israelites to Canaan, and exacts a solemn vow and promise from their chief men that *his* body shall be carried for burial to the Holy Land—*not then*, when he dies, perhaps for fear of exciting suspicion and hatred toward his people, the occasions of which may have been begun already to show themselves a little,—but when 'God visits' them for this return. So his body being embalmed, as the custom was for all the rich, the chief men of his people made a record of this sacred charge of their great kinsman.

Evidently they had even then grown into a great 'tribe,' made up perhaps of thousands of households. Joseph's last words to them, and the very first words we have about them afterwards, show that, so far from adopting the Egyptian religion, they quietly continued in that of their fathers—their residence together, and apart from the other people, saving them both from the dangerous contact of false custom, and from the collisions of prejudice and persecution. That after Joseph's death they did not persevere in as much faithfulness to the pure traditions of their forefathers, is quite likely. How much they may have begun to neglect the holy seventh day; how much less frequent their sacrifices were; the holy Name less revered, the domestic virtues sinking before passion and selfishness; the lessons of humility and peni-

tence toward God, and the thoughts of a future judgment and life forgotten, we do not at all know. Yet even in the Exodus, before 'the Law' was given, they had their regular 'priests' (Exod. xix. 24), and the Sabbath Day was still well known (xvi. 23). They were not (not even entirely during the greatest oppression) under the orders of Egyptian local officers, but had the old patriarchal rule of the chief men (or 'elders') of their various families (Exod. iii. 16, etc.).

How long after Joseph's death their prosperity lasted, we do not certainly know. Perhaps for an ordinary generation. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the impression of his wisdom and goodness and of his great services to the whole nation outlived him, at least during the reign of that king who survived him. The History does *not* say that '*as soon as Joseph was dead* there arose up a new king, which knew not Joseph.' Nor is it reasonable to assume so positively, as is the fashion now, that this means a change of dynasty or great revolution, such as is said to have been caused by the expulsion of the so-called 'Hykso' kings. It is natural enough to suppose that, as the great Israelite's influence and memory began to fade, the native Egyptians grew envious of these prosperous men of another race and religion, and afraid of what they might yet do, in some dangerous contingencies, from like alienation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Much is conjectured by modern writers, and, as might be expected from the very slender and confused ground of *fact* upon which it is all built, without agreement among them, about a reign of 'shepherd kings' or 'Hyksos' in Egypt in those early days, and its date as related to the times of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. My own judgment, after comparing the various arguments, is that we know nothing as yet by which to decide these disputes of chronology; that any such detailed chronology must be almost more mythical—I was going to say,—certainly rather hypothetical—than historical; and that it is of very little consequence for the real purpose of our history. At least, simple love of truth must for the present leave these questions as to how far the fragments of Manetho are history at all, or valuable material for history, and what credit is to be allotted to the various interpretations of them by the lately discovered Egyptian remains—rather to the disputes of those zealous 'specialists,'—than adopt any of them into its conclusions. For the illustration of various arts, and of social life, the latter are indeed very valuable,—for as early dates as these, as yet of small account.

As for supposing the Pharaoh of Joseph to have been one of those 'shepherd kings,' the utter silence of Genesis (chap. xxxix. to the end) about any such

difference between the king and the people, seems to me quite against this. If there were *any* actual proof of the supposed fact, this mere negative would be nothing. But in the actual case it is a great deal. All is pure Egyptian on one side. Joseph alone (and his family afterwards) represents the Shemites. There are points in the narrative when this 'Hykso' power, if existing, would naturally have been alluded to, *e.g.* the complaint of Potiphar's wife (where, indeed, Joseph is indicated as the *only* Shemitic foreigner), the elevation of Joseph, the coming of the strangers to buy, the removal of Jacob and his family. On the contrary, the clear antithesis between these Shemites and *all* the Egyptians—king, court, and people—is always the same.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE EXODUS.

IT was about 1570 years before the Advent of Our Lord, while Greece was as much a barbarous country as Central Africa is now, and when we have still no real history in the world—apart from this Book of God,—except such as can be guessed out of the Egyptian remains,<sup>1</sup> that Moses the Israelite was born. And then it was in circumstances which, according to ‘the laws of Nature’ (so far as anybody could have known of such things then, or indeed can now; for what can we understand in such a case of the inherited vital force of any infant, either for its future bodily or spiritual life?) indicated anything but a long life, much less a famous and powerful one, to this feeble little spark of human nature. On the contrary, the parents had little hope that he would live many days. For the Israelites were no longer favourites in Egypt; they were not even neglected and despised. They were now all the suspected, hated, and unhappy slaves of the king. This suspicion and hatred went so far that, unlike most owners of slaves, who see gain for themselves in the increasing numbers of them, all the public authority of Egypt was put forth to stop this increase, and in a way that must in the end exterminate them, at least as a distinct people.

The King’s decree was that every male child was to be killed as soon as born. To disobey or evade this was of course the instinct of every Hebrew mother. But how could that long succeed? Tyrants and their spies and soldiers

<sup>1</sup> At least as long before the Vedas or Zerdusht the Persian as it is now since the discovery of America. This is so if we adopt any of the other chronologies, instead of Usher’s as above, which, upon the whole, seems to me the safest.

care little for the instincts or rights of their victims, and have the actual power. The growing child, with its cries and its wayward ways, would soon thwart all the artifices of affection. Certainly, according to 'the laws of Nature' for everything except what we *know* better by 'faith,' the Hebrew boy's career was like to be short. So it was by unusual *faith* (Heb. xi. 23), according to the still strong tradition of their people, in God's promise of future prosperity to them in Canaan, that his parents, seeing him a child of unusual promise of beauty and vigour, took such care to conceal his birth, that he was three months old when it became plain that the secret could be kept no longer. But even then, instead of waiting for the inevitable discovery, they had faith in God's preserving the helpless infant when they could no longer watch over him. And so, twisting together some of the broad rushes of the Nile banks into a little box, and coating it with pitch and river mud, the mother hid her child in it, and set it down among those tall weeds on the marshy edge of the great river. This was what faith did. The 'laws of Nature' would have suggested that if the hungry crocodiles or other like haunters of the place did not soon find it, it would almost certainly perish by hunger or thirst.

But how this brought about the saving of that wonderful life, and the preparation of it for deeds not surpassed in all history, we have all read in the incomparable words of the Divine History itself—that he grew up as the adopted child of that dreadful king's daughter and sister of his successor, recognised by all as the only surviving one of those doomed children of the Hebrews, and as having escaped through a freak of compassion in one of those who alone could make such an exception. Probably his own bright and noble qualities as child and youth made this grow into great pride and affection on the part of his preserver. He seems never to have adopted, or been required to adopt, the religion of Egypt. Or else it was in just such a great crisis of life, having this choice before him, and deliberately resolving by adhering to the True God Whom his fathers had worshipped, to sacrifice his high place, and to choose the lot of the poor, oppressed sons of Israel, that by this preference of *faith* he



'chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of *God*, than to enjoy the pleasures of *sin* for a season' (Heb. xi. 25). The main question was of true or false religion: that of race or mere sentiment was of far less account.<sup>1</sup> Out of this doubtless grew the occasion of his taking the part of an Israelite whom he saw thus abused by an Egyptian, in consequence of which he had to flee for his life into the desert of Arabia, was heard from no more, given up for dead, and forgotten by both enemies and friends.

Forty years more went on these wrongs and miseries of the Israelites, both as field-slaves and toiling in gangs under severe 'taskmasters'—making the unburnt bricks of that country for public works. Meanwhile the first cruel Pharaoh died, but his successors had no more mercy upon the Israelites. At last their kinsman Moses suddenly reappeared among them with a message *from God*. Very few of his own people could possibly have remembered him enough for recognition. But he did not come alone. His brother Aaron was with him, who also, by a sudden command of God, which must have seemed wonderful and awful to him, had gone out into the desert a little way to meet and accompany him, and be his chief spokesman. So they gave a message from God to the chief men of their people assembled for the purpose, of compassion upon their sorrows, and of summons to follow Moses into the land of Canaan, where they should be free and happy, and be *His* people. And they believed this, and worshipped this Lord God. How senseless and impossible this would have been if they were a people without any religion, or with that of the Egyptians, or any except the pure and true one of their forefathers!

But to understand this so far, and what follows, we must consider more fully the character of Moses now. It was far from the same sort of person who fled from Egypt forty years before, that entered it now. To the character till then shaped by such an easy and elegant life: by teachers and documents, and in constant sight at least of the splendours of false religion, had been added *almost a lifetime* of stillness, simplicity, and thought; of sorrowful yearnings after his own people, yet new, peaceful, domestic affections; of spiritual worship of

<sup>1</sup> Just the opposite with the Jews of our day.

the Only Eternal and Unseen Lord, and much meditation in the solitude of his shepherd's work, especially perhaps when that kept him for weeks together in the valleys around the sublime Sinai mountains, which to this day strike all travellers with awe by their terrific precipices and thunder-echoing heights.

His new home, let us remember, had been with Reuel the Arabian, a shepherd chief, who, so far from being an idolater, was evidently one of those, like Job and Melchizedek—beside Abraham and his descendants—who continued in the primitive tradition and Religion. His family may have been the last survivors of such in Arabia. So would Moses' talk with them by the evening fire, or on the sacred rest-day of the week, have been of the true history of Adam and Enoch; of Noah and the Flood; of Babel and the Dispersion; of the gracious Word of God to men for the commandment of love and truth; for the promises of future redemption and grace; for the present duties of humility, repentance and sacrifice; for the judgment and better life to come.

From this discipline of almost a lifetime, compared with which all that 'wisdom of the Egyptians' in which he had been once instructed could have left but a small impression upon his character and thoughts, he was one day suddenly called to be a great prophet of God. He was many miles from the more permanent home, with the flocks, in one of the little valleys of that tongue of the Arabian desert between the two northern bays of the Red Sea—now commonly known as the peninsula of Sinai,—when he saw a wonderful thing—a bush suddenly in a blaze of fire, for which there was no apparent cause. This was strange enough of itself. But what was stranger still, that which must have been destroyed in a few minutes continued burning for a long time, and still entirely unconsumed. When at last he went toward it to look more closely, a voice came out of the blaze, calling him by name, bidding him not approach, but remain at a distance with reverence. The voice then told him that the speaker was the Great Only God, Whom he and his people worshipped; that He was now about to deliver this His people, the family of Israel, from their distresses. He would therefore now send him to Egypt to the court of Pharaoh, to demand this in His Name, and then to conduct them from that land to Canaan.

The wonder and awe, the fear and hesitation of Moses at all this as related at length (Exod. iii., iv.), are very natural. So far as we know, there had been no word of God direct to men for at least 150 years before this. But in the end Moses believes and obeys, and goes on his sublime and dangerous mission.

Some of his doubts had been as to what proofs of his authority for this his kinsmen of Israel would exact; how much religious faith in God, in opposition to the actual power of the terrible Egyptians, they would have; what they still knew or believed of the God of their fathers after all these generations of calamity and of bad influences. In answer to all this God not only gives him the power of 'doing great signs and wonders' before Egypt as well as Israel, but declares more fully than ever before (in the Book) His great Name of 'THE LORD' or JEHOVAH,—its real meaning, 'I AM that I AM,' He Who exists absolutely, whether anything else does or not, anything else only existing by His Will. 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you.'

This alone is the answer to all atheistic nonsense (see Matthew Arnold, *Lit. and Dogma*, passim), which would try to persuade us against our common sense that the Old Testament does not represent God as 'a person.' If He is not a Person, then there are no persons (*we* are not such) and no things. Imagine what would have been the effect upon the Israelites of a different answer to their question—such a one as Mr. Arnold now offers to us:—Thus (*the people*) 'What is His name?' (*Moses*) 'A power not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' They could not but have thought him either a madman or a mocker, who could thus describe the Mighty Deliverer out of such hopeless and helpless misery, in Whom they were now to *believe*, in the face of all they could *see*—thus virtually to describe Him as the 'I AM NOT.'

But *with* faith Moses sets out upon an undertaking which *was* madness, if it was not God's Will and commandment. With what emotions must he have emerged from the silent sands of Arabia, and again walked in fertile and populous Egypt! The fear for his life which hurried his steps at that border forty years ago was gone before faith.

God had not only sent him, but had also assured him that all the men were dead who then sought his life (Exod. iv. 4). Those who had succeeded them, from the king down might remember having heard of all that, when it was reported that the Moses of forty years ago was alive and in Egypt again. But all personal interest in such a long-past matter had been crowded out of attention by later events. No allusion to it whatever occurs in all which this Pharaoh and his officers have to say, though, if it had been in their thoughts, we can hardly conceive of its not being brought up in such a way as to be told in the *Exodus*.

To resume the narrative (from p. 382): Moses and his brother go at once to the very presence of the dreaded king, and deliver him this message: 'Thus saith the Lord (*Jehovah*), the God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.' A very extraordinary message, both in the bearers, the receiver, the Sender, and the purport of it! So indeed it must have sounded to all the Egyptians. It was not a message from the Israelites; the brothers did not profess to be sent by their people. That people seem to have been known already among the Egyptians by that name (Israel) of their ancestor who brought his family there more than two centuries before. But it was now merely the name of a servile class, of a different race and religion, not only despised but suspected. And this was a demand in their behalf upon their absolute master. Who was it that ventured to send such a message? 'The Lord' or 'Jehovah'<sup>1</sup> was, as Pharaoh well knew, the object of worship in their mean way of these Hebrew slaves. But he knew no such person as being anything to him, least of all to send him messages of command.

<sup>1</sup> Through this passage of the history, for the sake of clearness of narrative, I shall now use the latter translation, though I am by no means of opinion that our English Bible would be improved by such a change throughout. The new term would not mean anything to us corresponding to יהוה in the Hebrew—would be to us a mere arbitrary name of the Jews, as Dagon of the Philistines. Nor is *l'Eternel* of the French translation a happy rendering, if the great critic Matthew Arnold does so in effect decide for his purposes. יהוה is not an adjective with the essential feebleness of that part of speech for such a name, but a verbal noun, with a power and majesty of its own for which we have nothing adequate. 'I AM,' as the great Name, would approach nearest. Upon the whole, the term 'Lord,' with its hallowed associations, is best retained.

‘ And Pharaoh said : Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go ? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go.’ We have seen the true Religion before in contact with the false in Egypt. Now, for the first time, we see them in *collision*.

For our purpose, within the limit of details which must be fixed for it, I assume that the whole story of this great struggle between human power and prestige on the one side, and the Will of God to remove this people of Israel to the land of their fathers on the other, is familiar to every one of my readers, as they have it in the Book of Exodus, chaps. v. to xv. It is a wonderful story, each particular of it worthy of deep study, and so useful in its suggestions as to this very history of Religion, that it is only thus passed over because to treat it adequately would require more minuteness and fulness, and more of the reader’s time, than is now expedient. Therefore (only reserving such allusions to the incidents of the Ten Plagues, the Passover, the Passage of the Red Sea, etc., as may be necessary hereafter) we will pass at once to the march of the great host as it leaves the Red Sea behind and plunges into the Arabian wastes.

Since that first summons to Pharaoh a new nation had been, as it were, ‘ born at once ’ (Isa. lxviii. 8). This saying has been applied to many other cases ; notably by the orators of my own people to what took place on July 4th, 1776. But without stopping to make all the comparisons suggested, that figure of the prophet belongs to the Church of God. Yet for that very reason it also looks back to the event by which, *for the first time*, the cause of true Religion was to become for ages the sole and special trust of *one nation* as such.

Until then there had been one *family*, a line of patriarchs and chiefs, who had this charge. The last of these had died many generations ago. The sacred trust had not perished. It had passed in a general way to all their descendants ; and these, though in a strange land, had ‘ increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty ’ (Exod. i. 7). They now numbered hundreds of thousands of souls. Was the true Religion in this proportion advanced in the world ?

We cannot say that. On the contrary, it was in some respects rather as if a precious taste and fragrance had been so diluted in a great mass as almost to be lost beyond any perception. There had been no prophets of God such as those patriarchs were, until this Moses. There are no signs then in the History of that mighty 'faith,' by which those fathers 'walked with God'; though doubtless it was the beginnings of a return to this which He was moving in their hearts (and responding to with His pity), that now they 'sighed by reason of the bondage, and *their cry came up unto God*,' etc. (ii. 23). They *could* not keep from *all* contact with false worship and its bad morals as the patriarchs had done in Canaan. They were all slaves of the idolaters; and the wiser of them must have been troubled for the probable effect of this upon their children, if continued much longer; and which they knew to be a more dreadful evil than even the 'cruel bondage.'

I have already shown (see p. 376, etc.), how the whole narrative implies that they had continued the Religion of their fathers, though no doubt in a continually increasing negligence and imperfection. But we have a striking corroboration of this in that very first message of God to Pharaoh (v. 1): 'Let *My people* go, that they may *hold a feast unto Me* in the wilderness': that is, 'perform their accustomed religious rites, but in retirement in the desert country, where they will neither offend the Egyptians nor be annoyed by them.' So Pharaoh and his officers also understood it (vers. 8, 17) as equivalent to their saying: 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' (See also chap. x. 7-11, 24-26.)

It was the Will and purpose of God that His Word to men should not be utterly lost among them by this process of decay. He would now have a 'people' to preserve it. But a people with such a charge needs to be a *nation*, with its own government, rulers, and laws,—certainly not a mere swarm of people who are the bondmen of powerful idolaters. The multitude of Israelite families in Egyptian Goshen must become '*My people* Israel,' in a land of their own. Moses was the prophet through whom He would send this new Word. He must lead them out of Egypt with Divine wonders that overawed and overwhelmed their powerful oppressors. He must rule them with supreme power from

God, in gradually turning these abject subjects of tyrants who worshipped false gods, into a free courageous nation able to fight its way into its own land, and to *maintain* there a nation, laws, and Religion for ages after this leader had died. A great beginning of this had now been made. Their 'faith,' their thoughts of the Unseen God, and courageous trust in His promises of success in all this, had been wonderfully raised by the mighty miracles of their Exodus, especially that crowning one at the Red Sea, when, before the eyes of the terrified fugitives, all that riches and numbers, military resources, discipline, and accustomed courage could do against them, had been utterly vanquished by their God.

It is a remarkable fact needing to be much pondered and studied, that from this time forth that 'chosen nation' of Israel is not in these Holy Writings usually called a 'nation,' but '*the* people,' as distinguished from 'the nations,' meaning all other such, and who all had false religions.

Moses now leads them first a little way down the east shore of the Red Sea, and then in through the rock valleys eastward to the foot of that Mount Horeb or Sinai where God first spoke to him. In quite a wide and level valley, between great mountains, which spreads out to the north of that lofty and awful mass of treeless rocky steeps, they fix a camp, the whole silent space at once turned into a swarming city, as populous as any, after London, now existing. Here indeed they are to 'serve' (worship) God as He had foretold (iii. 12).

But now came a new charge to the prophet, more important even than his leading the escape from Egypt. This was to receive from God, and deliver in His Name, to all the Israelites, a system of Commandments and Laws under which they were to be a *nation*, the 'holy people' of God. Theirs then was to be the main history of true Religion for the next fifteen centuries, though they would be perhaps not more than the fiftieth, or even the hundredth, part of mankind for all that time. How this *could be*, and many other things which belong with it, must of necessity be to us (as to 'the elders' of all those ages) in the main only known by faith in God. But all the more for this, we need, in order to maintain such faith against the perplexities and the cavils

of others, in these last days, not to encumber it by any mistakes which may have become the tradition of all our writers,—to receive it simply as God has revealed it, and not under the conditions of any such theories and assumptions.

If this new 'dispensation' of Moses is not according to its own history a 'development' and enlargement of all that God had taught mankind before, but in some points an actual *contraction*, to correspond to the general loss of primitive truth, then let us take it so, and not try to stretch the historical facts, or distort them to fit the theory of 'development.' I can but wonder that it has not long since occurred to all students of this, what a suggestion of this fact there is to us all upon the very highest authority, when Our Lord expressly remarked upon one detail of the Law of Moses: 'From the beginning it was not so,' and that 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts,' had in this departed from the earlier and better law of God, to which the perfect religion of Our Redeemer would now bring all men back. This lowering of the primitive Religion as it was in the first Word of God to men, had been going on before, even from the very Fall, as we have already seen (see p. 272, etc.).



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE ORIGIN OF WRITING.

WE have thus reached the first historical mention of *Writing*. Most of us do not find it easy to appreciate the greatness of this fact. Supposing any language spoken, we think that, of course, the words must have come to be written down to prevent things being forgotten or mistaken, and to send messages to the absent. But observe the amazement of any savages when they first meet with the use of writing by more civilised people, though speech is a matter of course to them, and used by them often with much quickness and strength of thought. It is not merely a new idea received with delighted surprise, yet comprehended and used at once by them. On the contrary, it is most mysterious, magical, and incredible for a long time; can only after much explanation and insistence be made practical to them. Surely this is at once a good reason for not believing what some have conjectured, and then insisted upon,—that men invented the use of letters: a strong suggestion that the chasm between spoken and written language may be so vast, that it never would have been crossed by human ingenuity; that, like speech itself, it needed a communication from God—at first not unlikely in very simple form, but which the art of man could enlarge with use and need, and so build its later and larger fabrics. All tradition, so far as I can understand it, points that way. The Greek legend of Cadmus bringing letters to Greece from the Phœnicians (by which was fairly meant the whole Syrian people, including the Hebrews), is in accord with this. It is but fair to ask of those who would reject with ridicule this supposition of the beginning of letters, to justify their positiveness by some

sort of positive proof; for, so far, it is at least as rational to think it given by God, Whose writing to men is, as we see, at least almost the first distinct historical instance of it which we have, as to attribute it to a man's invention, of which and of whom no instance like this can be given. And if the condition of a sufficiently great occasion for miraculous 'intervention' be also demanded, it is indeed a *nodus dignus tali vindice*. For just then just such a written language was needed to set down in clear and permanent form the laws of the 'people of God,' and to record these events of their history, as until that time, and for ages after, no other real history would be written; thus making, not only the most venerable, but far the most august and authoritative book in the world, no less than the first part of 'God's Word Written.' I do not state this view of the origin of writing as any necessary part of the history of true Religion. So far as that goes, this art might have been as plainly the invention of men as that of building, which was now also about to be employed by the Israelites in Religion. I was myself not at all averse to finding that, *e.g.*, it had grown by improvement from the use of hieroglyphics among the Egyptians, or first been invented by other Syrians or Assyrians. But upon examining the arguments and supposed proofs, I have been struck with the utter failure of all such attempts, even those that are now so positively put forth as the final, demonstrated science of the gradual improvement of the Egyptian picture-writing into the Alphabet. I would be glad to show this fully, but that would require a book of itself. The following summary of the facts must suffice:—

1. Before Moses we have no actual writing. The hieroglyphics of Egypt or the so-called hieratic or demotic characters of the oldest papyri are far from such alphabetic writing as a real History and Law could have been recorded in.<sup>1</sup> In fact the gap is so wide between the best of these hieroglyphics and the rudest alphabet, that until very lately all the most ingenious men have agreed that there was no bridging it by conjecture, nothing in common that indicated any natural relationship. 2. *After* Moses we certainly *have* the alphabetic writing. But this is far from all the facts in

<sup>1</sup> See Ewald, i. 51; Gesenius, *Scr. Phœn. Mon.*, i. 14; Wall, Pt. III. 20, etc.

this direction. For us, at least, who have no doubt that this story of the Exodus is God's Word, we have such writing *with* Moses (Exod. xxiv. 4, etc.).

On the other side there is no other instance of it for 500 years *later*. Yes; those oldest inscriptions of Phœnicia and Syria, upon which the other argument is all built, are later than the writings of Moses by a far longer time than it is now since the discovery of America.

Yet while sundry other theories of the origin of the Alphabet are zealously argued, curiously enough, no one now even notices the possible solution which common sense would suppose should be tried first, *i.e.* that the other peoples got the Alphabet from Moses and the Israelites. Indeed, so far from this, some of them, in defiance of facts, assume that this proves that Moses did not write at all. The question is even raised to a much higher plane when we have an exact historic fact, from which we may perhaps infer that even Moses was not the first writer,<sup>1</sup> for *he* records — 'And He gave unto Moses when He had made an end of communing with him, upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God' (Exod. xxxi. 18), and 'the tables were the work of God: and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables' (xxxii. 16).

Here is a fact of the first magnitude in the inquiry before us. It cannot therefore but reasonably impair in our minds confidence in any supposed results of a research which takes no notice whatever of this. Even upon the ground that it is no fact *as recorded*, it surely is a fact that these sentences occur in the Hebrew writings. He who<sup>2</sup> (as I think, in utter violation of fair judgment) assigns the date of this book to 500 years later, that is, to the time of the very earliest Phœnician inscriptions, is still bound to inquire what historic value and significance this remarkable statement may have then. I am sure that if it had been discovered in Herodotus, or even Plato, so far from being

<sup>1</sup> I defer to a later place noticing the bearing of the Book of Job upon this question, also as to Gen. xxxviii. 18; Exod. xiii. 9, 16, xvii. 14 (see p. 402, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> Ewald and all his adherents, as well as the perhaps more destructive criticisms of the school of Kuenen.

upon any ground whatever passed over without notice, it would have been most carefully and minutely discussed, as to what historical force and sense or suggestion it *might* have in the main contention. That no one of these later writers, *e.g.* Rev. Isaac Taylor, *The Alphabet*, etc., 1883,<sup>1</sup> so much as even alludes to it, must, as I have before suggested, greatly impair the force of his conclusions, not to say render them utterly worthless. But to us who have no doubt whatever of the historical and literal truth of the Book in question, the defect is at once fatal.

This seems the more inexcusable, because we have had in English, for thirty or forty years past, a very extensive and thorough discussion of the same questions, which turns mainly upon those words. That it was written by a British scholar, a Professor of Hebrew in the University of Dublin, should hardly deprive it of all attention of our investigators. (Is this another instance of the fascination of all German scholarship over our later writers, which makes them confide more in that strange combination of research, imagination and intellectual self-sufficiency, which, with all its attractive merits in some ways, does seem the characteristic of the Teutonic genius of our day, than in the less laborious yet more judicious and reverent English<sup>2</sup> mind?) Thus I cannot find in Mr. Taylor, and the other writers of the same school, any notice whatever of the *Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews*, etc., by Rev. C. T. Wall, D.D., etc., London, 1841-56. On the other hand, upon myself comparing the two, I find much in Dr. Wall which is by no means refuted or superseded by the later Egyptian researches, taking them at their fair results; but, on the contrary, much of his argument is not in any way answered by these later writers, but seems to me, so far, unanswerable from their point of view. This is a singular response to the suggestion of his title-page motto, *πατάξον—ἀλλ' ἀκούον*. Or rather, those who have since represented the opinions he controverts, have failed either to 'strike' in

<sup>1</sup> In all that follows I shall take this, the most recent investigation and argument upon that side, as representing it all, though I have also endeavoured to give a thorough and candid attention to all that Gesenius, Bunsen, Lenormant, Ewald, etc., have said to the same effect.

<sup>2</sup> In which I include the American-English.

refuting his arguments, or to 'hear,' in taking any notice of them. If this could happen so lately to an eminent person, I must not be surprised at like treatment of myself by some who claim to be the only courageous seekers after truth.

Dr. Wall's contention is, that the art of alphabetic writing was then first communicated to mankind by God in the writing upon the two tables of stone. In this he may be too positive, and indeed, not allowing enough for the facts which indicate an earlier possession by some men of the art of writing. Yet, as between his argument and that which is now commonly given out upon the authority which will be generally followed (see, for instance, *Ency. Brit.* art. ALPHABET, 9th ed.), that 'Egypt must be credited with having originally invented the alphabetical system,' I should have to decide for him. But returning again to the whole question, more largely, and as still a question (see p. 272, *supra*), we have to choose between these four alternatives: Firstly, that the Phœnicians invented it; secondly, that the Egyptians are the real inventors, the Phœnicians or some other 'Shemites,' who are not Hebrews, having given some assistance in improving the hieroglyphics into an alphabet; thirdly, that no reasonable account of its beginning can be conjectured; or fourthly, that it has come to all the rest of mankind first from the Hebrews, who most probably had received it by direct gift from God.

Now why, as I have suggested before, should we not begin the investigation according to the common-sense view of the facts; that, as the Hebrew writings, which are, *most probably*, any way, and, I suppose, really without any reasonable doubt, ascribed to Moses, are far the oldest alphabetic writings extant, the first inquiry should be in that direction? When and if we can come to no safe conclusion there, it will be soon enough to attempt any one of the others. And let us note once for all, that if we cannot precisely fix the *date* of that beginning with the Hebrews, that does not decide against it; for we should be no worse off than we are sure to be in our results elsewhere. Those who are now so sure of the Egyptian origin cannot fix the initial point of the alphabet within many hundreds of years.

It does not seem to me to have been noticed how much

more authority in this should be allotted to a *book* than to a number of disconnected inscriptions, even if some of them, or even if we were sure that all of them, were of as early date. Far more in the latter case has the meaning to be made out by conjecture. Whereas the connected thoughts of a book of law, or probably still more of a history, through 60,000 words like the Pentateuch, or even 1000 words of some small part of it, interpret one another in a way that the other cannot approach. Nor is that all. The one is a collection of widely scattered fragments, necessarily local and temporary in their meaning, of which the real certain clue has been lost for thousands of years. The other is one connected series of thoughts of enduring value, the meaning of which has been kept alive by continuous and connected use through all that time.

This vast inferiority is far from compensated by these monumental stones and metal plates being the *originals*, while we know that the books are only copies. Do I not rightly have more confidence of reading what Shakespeare wrote in a good copy of this year's imprint, than in some torn and bleared anonymous scrap, just found in an old chest,<sup>1</sup> which may *possibly* have been of his time? And if we have reason to believe (as we have abundantly in this case) that it was the Will and care of God that the writings should be accurately transmitted, there is no room left for doubt.

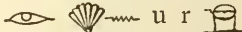
Was the art of writing with Moses then part of that 'wisdom of the Egyptians' which he had learned in his youth? We cannot reasonably so conjecture (there is, of course, no proof of it). For the Egyptian writing was then *hieroglyphic*, which could not possibly record words in another language;—nor that variation of this found in the old papyri, and now commonly called *hieratic* or *demotic*,—which also from its derivation cannot well represent any sounds but those of its original language. What is still more decisive, as Lenormant admits (and in this substantially all the profound students of language agree), 'no abstract idea' (rather, no spiritual one), 'could by its very

<sup>1</sup> Yet that would be for the purpose of far more value than the brief disconnected and obscure Phœnician or Moabite inscriptions, compared with the Book of Moses as to date.

nature be expressed in that sort of writing.'—(*L'Alphabet Phénicien*, p. 12.) He even says (p. 10) that it 'cannot be called writing.' It is equally incapable of recording History in sequence—can only present disconnected *scenes*.

On the other hand, as it was God's gracious Will that true Religion was now to be recorded in writing, both as to Law and History, it is reasonable to suppose that He had either supplied His prophet and His people with real, *i.e.* alphabetical writing by other means already, or would do it immediately now. In either case, like all else we have that is good, it was and should be regarded as His gift. Is it partly from repugnance to this thought of God as the Giver of every good, that there is now such a prevailing dislike to allow a supernatural origin of language,—as forcing it upon men immediately? I am not aware of seeing in any account of language, as human invention, a devout and grateful acknowledgment of its being the loving gift of God.

Or is it probable that the Israelites had already received it from the people of Egypt during their stay in that country, the Egyptians having slowly evolved it from their hieroglyphics? It seems to me, on the contrary, highly improbable. The fact that the Egyptians themselves had no alphabetic writing for many hundred years *after*, alone is fairly decisive of this, notwithstanding some attempts (see *The Alphabet*, etc., by Rev. I. Taylor) to account for this by their revolutions and wars. Why has that very civilised and ingenious people no written history for a thousand years after, while the barbarous Hebrews have? We should expect the reverse of this,—that those inventors, having already found the wonderful idea, which even their ignorant fugitive slaves had learned from them, would have gone on to perfect and use it far more effectively. What has been said of the struggle and antagonism of ideographic writing against the alphabetic (see I. Taylor) points far more in the direction of the impossibility of the former ever passing into the latter, and shows that an alphabet was an altogether un-Egyptian idea. Did the Israelites then invent it among themselves in their bondage? This also is not probable. But the greatest element of that improbability is in the fact of its transcending all human ingenuity, as History through-

out goes to show. There is a vast chasm between the ideographic or picture-writing and the method of representing all words by the combination of a few characters (letters) that stand for the different vocal elements, *i.e.* an alphabet. The ingenuity of man has done the former, and carried it to quite a pitch of refinement. It was so not only with the Egyptians, but also the ancient Mexicans. And then, perhaps (for the reading of demotic sentences is by no means so certainly discovered), the need of abbreviating this, brought the former by degrees to representing some sounds or syllables by pictures that were rather arbitrary. We who have the alphabetic secret might now mistake this for an approach to the alphabet. It is not. It proceeds in a different direction. The *principles* of the two are quite opposite. The one is to call up an object into the mind by some picture of it; the other is to tell through the sight certain elementary *sounds* of the *voice*, which form spoken words. The compressed and refined sort of Egyptian hieroglyphics called *demotic* or hieratic, might therefore have gone on for ever without suggesting an alphabet. The amusement called a *rebus*, then, so far from being such a process of advancing from picture-writing to letter-writing, well considered, goes to show the impossibility of that supposed process. Even now the rebus cannot work without being helped out by alphabetic letters, syllables or words. It could only apply to one language. Thus:  *I fancy you are well.* That is quite plain in English. But imagine a Frenchman who knew only his own language, trying to make it out (*œil éventail mer u r puits*). Any alphabet can, in the main, write the words of any language. The Chinese characters also, whether at first picture-writing or not, never at the best got beyond signs for *syllables*, which is altogether another thing than an alphabet. How plain this is, if only from the fact that this ingenious people never did improve it into an alphabet in thousands of years, even when more or less in contact with other peoples who already had the art, and gave them the suggestion.<sup>1</sup> Thus

<sup>1</sup> Nor do we at all know when or how they got the first idea of this syllabic writing; not unlikely from the Syrian alphabet, preferring this inferior invention because singular and exclusive.



my own clear judgment upon the facts, even as presented by the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Lenormant, and Rev. I. Taylor, accords with what Dr. Wall says (ii. 300): 'Man cannot construct an alphabet by his own unaided powers of intellect till he has discovered the principle of its construction; and he cannot find out the principle until he gets under his observation a system of signs selected according to this very principle, of which he is ignorant.'

There is in this and other particulars some analogy of this question to that of the power of speech (see p. 138, etc.). The main difficulty, the great gulf between the non-writing and the writing man, as between the non-speaking and the speaking, is in the first conception and attempt. After that all is possible, and even easy, in the way of gradual perfection of the art. The case is indeed much stronger as to speech, for that is essential to any religious and real human life. The latter belongs to its great recovery and enhancement in the mystery of the Redemption of all mankind, when it pleased God that His Word, both as to Law, History, and Grace, should be written. But there is also a double analogy, in that the attempts to express thought by hieroglyphic figures and the like, are to real writing something as inarticulate cries of feeling or thought are to real speech. In each the first may be the vague aspirations after the other; but they never could conceive of it, much less achieve it until a Divine secret is imparted.

As to the resemblances, rather faint and few—yet admit them real,—of some of the Egyptian ideographs to alphabetic letters, they are naturally enough accounted for by the contact of the Israelites and other Shemitic peoples with these rich and ingenious Egyptians. The idea and principle of an alphabet once communicated to one people (the actual *forms* of letters were of course more or less arbitrary, and subject from the first to any sort of choice or change), such imitations would be natural enough.

Then, utterly abandoning the notion of an Egyptian origin, even by suggestion, what more reason have we to suppose that other Shemites, temporary rulers of Egypt ('Hyksos' or what), in a like way, or in any way, discovered the alphabet and communicated it to the Israelites? None

whatever. Common sense still requires us to look for the origin among the people whom we know of as having the art for hundreds of years, during which we have no proof whatever that the others had.<sup>1</sup>

We do find among these nations a most ancient tradition which should be fairly weighed as one of the facts, namely, that 'the gods,' or Divine power, first taught the art of writing to men.

It is indeed such a brilliant and wonderful idea—this of representing the articulations and sounds of all our words by a few simple marks,—that the first notion of it was not at all likely to occur to more than one man in any age, if to any one. And then he, as the inventor, would have never ceased to be remembered and honoured for it. Yet instead of this we have the humbler acknowledgment of it as a gift from beings superior to all men. If it were ascribed to some one of those who were believed to have once been men, and then raised to Divine honours, we might suppose this the gratitude given to a great inventor. But the tradition, on the contrary, is simply the general one of a Divine gift. Taking this with the mysterious difficulty of its first conception as already shown, it is an argument of no small force for ascribing it to the direct loving gift of God.

This naturally carries us to consider the ancient tradition of the Greeks, that the Alphabet was brought to them from Phœnicia by Cadmus. (It makes no difference as to this whether or not we allow the ingenious notion<sup>2</sup> that Cadmus represents no person, but the sons of *Kedem* or the East.) From this some would assume (they do not even take the pains to infer) that the Hebrew writing also was derived from their neighbours of Tyre and Sidon, as its inventors, or as having themselves got it from Egypt in their commerce.

<sup>1</sup> This is the very bold, not to say desperate, conjecture to which some late investigators (see *The Alphabet*, etc.) seem to have been driven by the evident difficulty of connecting the hieroglyphical Egyptians with an art which they never practised until taught it ages afterwards by some of these other peoples, but which was known to all the Syrians, Assyrians, and Greeks long before. But as they will not accept it from those in whose possession it was then and continuously afterwards for ages (see even Ewald, i. 49, etc.) the very convenient and elastic legend of the Hyksos, etc., is brought in to build a scientific result upon a mere conjecture.

<sup>2</sup> See Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, i. 18, etc. etc.

All that has been lately collected to support the new theories, fairly goes to show that the Phœnician alphabet is later than the primitive Hebrew, and derived from it. The former, according to the legend, having been brought to Greece about Moses' or Joshua's time, though it may have been as late as Samuel's, 400 years after, may have been simply the Hebrew, or one copied and a little varied from it in those ages of considerable intercourse between the Israelites and Phœnicians. From Mr. Taylor's own comparison of the Moabite Stone and the earliest Phœnician inscriptions I should infer that the Hebrew alphabet was older than the Phœnician.

Returning then to the Israelites encamped before Sinai, and now in possession of 'two tables of stone written with the finger of God,' which Moses and the whole people—for this is the necessary inference from all the incidents—could intelligently *read*, we have still the question, How came they first to have this great art of alphabetic language? Not from the Egyptians. Not from their own discovery. Not from the Phœnicians. We are to choose then between leaving the question altogether without solution or conjecture, or else, which to a devout and grateful mind is of necessity almost the same thing, thinking of it as a direct gift of God. Whether first by His writing upon the tables of stone, as Dr. Wall maintains, or at some earlier time, is another and inferior question. That the former is so precise in time and august in circumstance is certainly in its favour, but, as will be objected by some to the whole idea, it is not so told precisely as we might suppose so great an event would be. On the contrary, there are some things in the Divine History which do not seem quite in accord with it.

But before we notice these it will be well to notice again (see p. 147, and also 364) what will occur to many minds as a fatal objection to this account of the origin of writing in either view; namely, the assumption that there was no occasion for this miracle as the same thing could be effected by human invention. This repugnance to crediting a Divine miracle, and demanding what men will allow to be a sufficient occasion (or necessity) for it, meets us at every point in our age. But is it as reasonable as it is commonly allowed to

be even by Christian writers? Is there not something in it which is very presumptuous in one of us toward God, than which nothing can be more *unreasonable*? It is indeed a part of the common sense of Religion, in the way of reverence, to consider that God does nothing out of the usual order of Nature except for a great purpose, and in some way for our spiritual good. This, of course, rejects the superstitions of magic, or of looking for miracles in what is trivial, or neglecting the study of the vast and beautiful order in which He keeps ordinary things in movement, and gives us opportunities for science and for forethought. But it is a mere abuse of this truth to insist upon it as one of our intellectual rights, that we shall be satisfied as to a sufficient occasion, before we will believe a miracle of God. This turn of mind is exactly contrary to that spirit of humility and faith which is alone reasonable in us toward Him. And it is very misleading as to the discovery of what is true. It would be more in that direction to presume, that whatever He chose to do supernaturally must therefore be believed to have a sufficient occasion. The other notion is very likely to blind us to the most important facts. We then reject what is plainly before our eyes, because we assume that it is impossible.

The common argument, if it can be called so, is, that all men in former ages, and vast numbers in our own time, superstitiously believe that everything they do not understand is the immediate act of Divine power. So in a great sense it is, as well also in what we *do* understand in regard to its ordinary causes and consequences, or, as we say, 'general laws.' To see God in everything is the highest wisdom, as to see Him in nothing (and in degree as little as possible) is the worst *unreason*. (See *The Reign of God not the Reign of Law*, p. 222.) But it is an utterly false deduction from the follies which men commit in false religion, to the truths in true Religion. Thus: 'Because men in a perversion of the greatest truth, thought that their many imaginary deities caused thunder or pestilence by their arbitrary will, therefore it is superstitious for those who know and worship the only true God to believe that He literally caused His voice to be heard from the clouds at

Sinai, or then first gave men the lesson of written language for them to improve upon further; or that they cannot reasonably believe this wonder of God until they jealously examine it to see whether, *in their judgment*, there was a sufficient occasion.' In truth, without such faith in God as a little child has in a good father, we never can really begin to know the greatest truth; and with such faith these objections vanish.

And yet, so far as this can reasonably enter into our inquiry, there never was a plainer instance of such an adequate occasion. It was now that written Law was to begin; that written (that is, real) History was to begin. Then He Who bestowed these gifts upon men would give with them their necessary condition. He would not leave us to 'feel after' this for uncertain ages 'if haply we might find' it (for all experience had suggested that man never would in fact, by his gropings, lay hold of this master-key of assured and accumulating truth). Alas, it is much used by them now, many of the more intellectual of them, to obscure that greatest truth!

Then too a notion that the One Who made this contriving man for a purpose, and to Whom all that he can or ever will do is always known, that He could only avail Himself for His purposes of what this wonderful creature would happen to do, and when he would do it, is the weakest sort of that 'anthropomorphism' about the Divine, which these very objectors think so foolish.

The supernatural in its place being then just as rational and credible as the natural, is vastly more so where by the facts and fair probabilities the other is out of its place. And that seems to be the case before us. That God might, if He had so chosen, have so made man that he would have contrived language by an improving process in the lapse of time, until it was needed, as at this time, is certainly true. But that He did not, in fact, seems the more probable. That He was then under any sort of compulsion to wait any longer, or at all, as soon as we consider the notion, we see is absurd. It is virtually denying that the Absolute and Almighty One can do anything except what certain of His creatures have found out (or think they have), to be His

usual way with them, than which nothing can be more against the common sense of humility and reverence.

Therefore if this wonderful fact (for to treat such plain words as not a record of fact, because we have made up our minds to the absurd assumption exposed above, is only another instance of that absurdity), if the writing on the tables of stone with the finger of God, was absolutely the first writing mentioned in History, I should think Dr. Wall's conclusion almost irresistible.

But we have in the narrative preceding several notices which perhaps exclude that condition. On the way from Egypt to Sinai, the Bedouin Amalekites had interposed and attacked the company of Israel, but been driven back and routed. Then we have this record: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, etc.'<sup>1</sup> We *may* suppose that this writing was not then done or to be done, and therefore waited for the discovery of that art a few days later. Yet that is not the most direct implication. Even as to the general assent of almost all writers now, that there is no trace of writing among the descendants of Abraham until after their stay in Egypt, the 'signet' of Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 18, etc.) shows that they had the use of some sort of significant engraved characters at least 250 years before Moses.<sup>2</sup> This indeed may have been in the 'ideographic' way. Dr. Wall also meets this quite ingeniously. Ewald and his school have a shorter way with all such difficulties by assigning whatever is against their notions to a 'Third,' 'Fourth,' 'Fifth,' or other 'narrator,' who altered the original history. The mere negative evidence, *i.e.* nothing being told of writing before, is far from conclusive. In fact, those who are so sure that the Book of Moses is made up from earlier 'documents,' testify to earlier writing, though I suppose this may as well have been by oral traditions as by 'documents.'

But then there is the Book of Job, which, as we have seen, bears plain marks of being as old as Moses, and probably older. Dr. Wall is confident that this was first ideographically set down, and then rendered into alphabetic writing by Moses. That is ingenious, yet not altogether satisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xvii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Also Exod. xiii. 9, 16—'a sign,' 'a token.'

We must probably be content always to leave the origin of the Book in a sublime obscurity. The 'newer criticism' (and some of the old) has that short and easy method of despatching such difficulties, by deciding that whatever was, from its antiquity, in the way of some notions, was to be set down for a modern fiction. But, as we have already seen, this is not according to the common sense of these facts.

And besides this very fact of its early authorship, there is a passage in the Book of Job (xix. 23, etc.) which must be taken into account: 'Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!' If we had only the latter clause of this sentence, we might interpret, according to Dr. Wall's conjecture, that Job had heard of the curious art of the Egyptians in cutting inscriptions with hieroglyphics in their great monuments, some probably of as early date as this, and which might have been seen by Job, —being discovered now by travellers upon the Arabian rocks, where it is supposed they were made when the Egyptians had garrisons in those parts. (The impossibility of so noting just such a sentence as Job had in mind, being no other than that great saying about *the Redeemer of his soul from death*, which follows immediately after, of course did not occur to Dr. Wall.) But the first part of the sentence as to 'words written' and 'in a book' (the very words always used in the Books of Moses for alphabetic writing) is not so easily adjusted to this. Yet Job might even have heard of the papyrus rolls, and had them in mind as to 'writing.' Still, the more natural reference is to this very art of alphabetic writing (the Shemitic), as being known already in those ages among a kindred people. This being so, all these his words may in fact have gone down by tradition and memory, as long compositions may with wonderful exactness pass down for generations (witness the first transmission of the Vedas in India—see M. Müller's *India*); or, there was alphabetic writing even then among the men of true Religion in Arabia.

We may therefore reasonably leave these minor questions undetermined, while we accept, as the most reasonable conjecture of the beginning of alphabetic writing, that God gave it to that chosen people to whom He would intrust

for all mankind that great gift of His love and mercy to our race,—His Word Written.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The more I study this method of Christian writers of our age, of always dealing in argument with the critics who believe the least—by surrendering to their assumptions, and never returning to the other ground,—the plainer it is that it involves a latent fallacy. That is, unless we mean by this a covert acquiescence in their position; and if so, why not say so at first?

Thus I have to understand the Rev. Mr. Taylor (*The Alphabet*, etc.) when he says: 'Without making any assumption as to the authorship of the Pentateuch, and avoiding disputed questions as to the date and composition of the Hebrew Scriptures,' etc., and then proceeds in all his argument upon the 'assumption' that Ewald and his school are right in their 'assumptions' of a late date, etc. Why is he who assumes the negative of any postulate in Religion, of course upon the right ground of reason, to which we are bound to descend and force him by argument, if we can, to admit the positive? If that is right, the utter sceptic who denies everything—not only God's being, but the world's, ours and his own,—is the only true reasoner to begin with. Yet allow this, and there is no reasoning.

We have to *assume* something or other. The sceptic assumes the negative as much as I do the positive; the only difference is, that I assume the truth, and he a falsehood. That is common sense, which if we do not begin with, all our processes and conclusions are worthless. I do not deny that when we set out to recover the few who have so lost themselves in the quagmire of doubting everything, that they must have a special treatment, like the persuasion which must be used with a lunatic for his good, that a little different treatment is necessary. But for *general investigation of facts*, which I understand to be the Rev. Mr. Taylor's object, we ought not to assume that he is on the safest ground of reason who denies the most of what we have learned to believe in our religion, but exactly the opposite.

This is the result of my own attempt to examine honestly and patiently as to the facts, that criticism of the Divine Writings and History which assigns to them the lowest date, and denies the old belief as to their authorship. And how indeed is the other view, which Mr. Taylor does not decide against, treated fairly by him, when it is excluded from the investigation, and the other 'assumed' to be correct, with an instant and necessary effect upon all the argument that follows? His first volume is largely occupied with this very question of the beginning of alphabetic writing (with the rest we have nothing to do). He is very positive that the Hebrew, Phœnician, and all other writing came from the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, who improved upon these until out of them came alphabetic letters. I have read his argument carefully, but it entirely fails to convince me.

Yet at least one might well expect a minister of the Christian Church to give great weight to the Holy Scriptures in matters of the earliest history. And so I suppose he means to do. There are in the main three views of this to choose between. One is to treat the Book of Moses as of no, or of very slight, value. Another is to accord it the very highest such value, as not only the best of such human writing, but more unqualified and certain truth than any other history we have. Another is to yield to others who will not allow it this value (though we do), and so to use it as history of much less value than it is according to our religious convictions. But that is not what this study so far has conducted us



to. If we thought the so-called writings of Moses a recent, and therefore unauthentic composition or compilation, then of course we should treat them as such. But if we do think otherwise, then, whatever others may think, we must reason from the whole facts as we understand them. This seems but common sense.

Thus Mr. Taylor's whole investigation proceeds upon the supposition of none of the Hebrew writing being earlier than the days of David. He assumes that the Moabite Stone is the first historic writing—say 800 years after Moses. Conclusions drawn from this are quite preposterous to those who have no doubt that Moses wrote these books many ages earlier (or who believe, indeed, that he wrote *anything*, as even Ewald allows that he did).

Nor is this all. He makes no mention of or slightest allusion to the express statement of Moses that the Ten Commandments were 'written with the finger of God.' One *might* allow what we have in the first books of Scripture to be the Word of God, and yet suppose that it was not written down until long after. But that he should take no sort of notice of this, is in the circumstances exactly equivalent to saying to other investigators: 'I concede that this is no fact of History. It is a myth or a superstitious fable; at best it is not historic fact, and has no bearing upon the facts of this case; it is not even such a respectable myth as we sometimes study for suggestions of History; it is not worth alluding to in any way.'

The more I consider this the plainer it is. We, at least, to whom that *is* a fact, must give it all the attention which such a fact deserves.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### BOOK OF MOSES—TEN COMMANDMENTS.

GOING back a little (see p. 387), it is evident that the great multitude who had travelled out of Egypt under Moses as a leader, and a pillar of fire and cloud as their guide, had never in all their lives before thought so much about their religion as within the three months past. The power and glory of God—the True and Only, ‘the God of all the earth’—had been continually before their eyes, in His messages to them through Moses, and His great miracles to terrify Pharaoh and to liberate them. All the true traditions had been revived in their hearts; all that had come down to them by father and son, from Jacob and from Abraham, from Noah and from Adam; all these things were brought out in their thoughts. We need not suppose, and we cannot well suppose, that the greatest of this truth was *fully* in their minds; that it was more than very partially and feebly there. Yet neither, on the other hand, can we reasonably doubt that much of it was in their memories. Thus they knew, in contrast with the corrupt religion of Egypt, that the sun was *not* God, nor the moon, nor any of the stars, nor beasts, however useful or terrible, nor departed souls of powerful men, nor (as the real Egyptian religion also taught) the absolute king of the time, the terrible Pharaoh. Him they had even seen drowned with all his mighty army in the Red Sea, by the Will and Word of the Only True God. And that God had been naming Himself and showing Himself every way ‘their God’; hearing their cries of helpless distress, pitying and delivering them. Now they were no longer slaves in a strange and cruel land, but a free nation marching back to the land of their fathers under His command and

favour. Yet that land they knew was full of fierce tribes, of false religion and wicked life, whom they as soldiers of the true God must dispossess.

And now to this tradition, putting much of it upon record, and yet in a measure quite superseding it, is to be added a *nation's* religion and laws. On the very eve of their Exodus a great public rite of the kind was established, the Passover—the sacrifice to God by each family of a lamb : this to be eaten by them as a feast that night, and on every anniversary of it after. That solemn mystery of bloody sacrifices, as an appeal to the mercy of God for the forgiveness of our sins, had come down to them from the Religion of the Patriarchs (see p. 268), and is really the great thing in the Hebrew Passover. We Christians know this better than they could, when we continue it in its greater form in the Sacrament of Our Lord's Passion and Death.

Even during the march to Sinai God had also given them certain rules for the Sabbath-day. But in arriving before that mountain we have also arrived at a great epoch as well as event in the History of Religion. For now the Voice of God is to be heard, not in a dream or vision, or even directly by *one* man, but by a vast multitude. HE speaks not merely to a patriarch, nor even Prophet, but to a nation. Even more, He writes His words of the Ten Commandments for their reading, and has them laid up in an ark of covenant among them. And He has His great Prophet Moses to write in books the very words which He speaks to him at length—of religious rites and of political law.

It is wonderfully interesting to us every way that these books have come down safe to us through all these generations. That which literary men are so enchanted with in the conjectural, and in every case somewhat questionable, antiquity of Chinese or Hindu books, they may be sure of in the books of Moses. And thus this is a great epoch in the History of Religion, as the beginning of having the Word of God in the enduring and historical form of Holy Writings or Scriptures. As we shall see later, other religions have had their 'scriptures.' But those are at least later in time, if not imitations, more or less conscious, of these. Discarding mere critical conjectures, and treating the facts with common

sense, we have now one Book of Moses. It became, long after, a fashion, which has its convenience, to make a division of this into five parts, and call them the 'Five Books of Moses,' or 'Pentateuch.'

The first of these, commonly called Genesis, considered by itself, is altogether unique and incomparable; among other things in this, that no man could write it (unless it were a 'blasphemous fable') except as 'moved by the Holy Ghost' to know things that God only can tell. Apply the theory and conjecture of earlier records and tradition to the utmost, and they cannot reach the first part of it. Whoever finds in it a true history of this world from its very first, as to which all other like writings are folly and fable, has a treasure incomparable. He, and He alone, can understand mankind and all subsequent history. Therefore Genesis is a very valuable part of 'God's Word Written.'

But the most interesting part of the writing of Moses, at the actual time of that writing, and to its first readers, was in the other 'books.' It by no means follows from this that those parts concern us now in the same proportion. To us, whose chief light is that of the Gospel and the Church of Christ, they still are of great use. But to those Israelites, and to the ancient world for long after, they were almost all.

Thus this Word of God, 'as He spake unto Moses,' has two distinct parts, the one of laws and ceremonies for the nation Israel, the other of what was, and always had been and always will be, true for all men. (And this division is also plainly taught us in the New Testament.) The whole is so far superior in truth, purity, and dignity, to what we can find in all other so-called sacred books of antiquity, that it would be a sort of miracle if it were a mere human composition. There are no silly fables mingled with its serious precepts; no filthy suggestions to or allowances of human baseness; no pompous and empty declamations. What it tells us of God is always spiritual, lofty, and beautiful. What it bids us do to our neighbour is just what would make men happy with one another.

Yet the immediate purpose of organising and keeping a nation, which, in the midst of powers that were all against

this, and in spite of the common human nature with the same opposing tendency, should not be idolatrous and superstitious, but should for many generations yet preserve the knowledge and worship of the Only True God, and the honour of His Commandments, and the (still undisclosed, though suggested and promised) mystery of His pardon of men's sins, and salvation from them by Sacrifice and Grace,—this purpose was not at all neglected to give prominence to the primitive and universal truth.

So the Polity and Ritual of the Israelites is something altogether *sui generis*. Men elsewhere never invented anything like it. They did not here. Moses was a wonderful, a very great man; but this invention was evidently far beyond his powers. Here I may notice a theory of some writers—which even Christians have caught up as if it were supported by the Divine saying, 'And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians' (Acts vii. 22),—that the Jewish Law was only an adjustment of the religious and political precepts of the priests of Egypt,—the wisdom and refinement of thought which was preserved among them, notwithstanding the low superstitions of the public religion.

But nothing could be less in accord with the facts.<sup>1</sup> At almost every point there is a striking difference between the Hebrew and the Egyptian ideas, while the resemblances are of the fewest and most faint. The whole general effect is in strong contrast. To see this one needs only to read the text of the two side by side—the Book of Moses and 'the Book of the Dead'—with such parts of the inscriptions and papyri as treat of such matters. The latter sometimes express a vague notion of a Supreme Something which is over all else; but actual prayer and adoration are not addressed to this, but to the persons of *Ra*, *Osiris*, etc., whose images and exploits are kept always in sight.

On the contrary, the former knows only One Divine Person, to Whom all worship is to be given, and calls any other object of worship 'a lie' and 'an abomination.' The latter repeats various abstract proverbs about what men ought to do to one another, while in fact the many were cruelly oppressed by the few, and the private morals of all were

<sup>1</sup> See also *supra*, p. 285, etc.

filthy. The latter, without any such boasting professions, provides practically for justice between men, and announces very plain laws of God as to purity, honesty, and kindness, as spoken from the cloudy and thundering Heaven above in the ears of all, and such thoughts about God as knowing all their thoughts and judging them thereby, as have far more power to keep men from evil than mere fine sayings.

The most striking instance of this religious goodness is in that very express law, that the Israelites should 'love the Lord their God with all their hearts,' etc. Nothing like this appears in all Egyptian or other heathen morals. If it were the invention of Moses, it would be the most wonderful contrivance in all History to make a people good. This, if not recognised here as the original law of all human life, but regarded as merely a national institution, that the Israelites should have this devotion to their special deity on account of his special favour to them—take it as that, if one will—and there is nothing like it in all History. Such a supreme devotion to one person, and he imagined to be all-powerful, perfectly just, pure and gracious, is an unequalled means of restraining men from the faults opposed to this goodness. However Moses came to put forth this law, he certainly did not get it from 'the wisdom of the Egyptians.'

There is another striking point of difference in them. I do not at all understand—it remains to me a great mystery—why so little is said, or even implied, in 'the Law and the Prophets' about our future and principal life. This fact—for such it is—does not at all prove that the people of Israel had had no thought for a thousand years before this of any human existence except in this world, or that God at this time taught them to regard only 'the things which are seen and temporal.' We may say that we know the contrary of that, and that the traditional religion of the Patriarchs which the Israelites inherited contained this truth of the future life. It is quite unreasonable to suppose that so great a matter of the primitive Religion absolutely disappeared from among the Hebrews at this time. It survived, as it does even until now, in a distorted way, in all the false religions. Observe how this was so among the Egyptians in their rites of burial (see *supra*, p. 289).

And so, had Moses contrived his law out of what his Egyptian education had done for him, the most prominent matter of all would have been this of judgment upon a man's destiny after death. The silence of his book about all this, may have been, for one thing, to separate more plainly between Egyptian and Israelite religion.

Further, as to the notion of some writers, that the Old Testament religion *excluded* the idea of future judgment and life, we should consider that, beside the allusions to this great truth scattered all through those writings, Our Lord Himself, its best Interpreter and real Author, gives us to understand that the true Religion always had included it. When He quotes from the Book of Moses the saying, 'I am the God of Abraham,' etc., as implying our greater future life, He says in effect that it was so meant and so understood then.

Take with this the thought of man learning his first Religion in Eden, and from the voice of the Lord God. Consider Enoch taken (whither?) by God, because he 'walked with Him.' Read the great saying of Job: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' etc. Remember the soul of Samuel reappearing to Saul. Hear David saying of his child: 'I shall go to him'; and Solomon saying that when the dust returns to the earth, 'then shall the spirit return to God Who gave it.' Even more: listen to David singing in the Temple, and the Prophets proclaiming in the Name of God such things as: 'When I awake in Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied'; 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in the place of the dead,' etc.; and Isaiah's predicting of the mighty king of Babylon, that after death his soul should meet those of his vanquished enemies, and hear them say, 'Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?' (xiv. 10.)

And yet there does remain the great mystery that so little is said of the other life in all the Old Testament. There is nothing to be said by us of that, but that it is like the very delay of Redemption for four thousand years,—a mystery of the Gracious Will of God of the first magnitude; and there we leave it.

The great day at Mount Sinai, one of the most sublime and solemn transactions in all history, is best told in the Divine words (Exod. xix.-xx.). It is well called 'The Giving of the

Law.' Yet the words of law *then* given, as written in the Holy Book, are not near the hundredth part of 'the Law that came by Moses,' as that was known and described to all the Israelites from his time to Our Lord's, and as it is in our hands now as a part of God's Word Written. In the midst of that which is all from God, we all recognise a great supremacy in those very words, uttered then with a voice not man's from among black clouds which hung around the mountain top, and which were first *written*, not even with the great prophet's hand in a book, but on slabs of stone 'with the finger of God.' And all believers in God since, and down to our time, understand that the supremacy of the Ten Commandments is not merely or mainly on account of this exceeding honour in the *manner* of the revelation, but that such honour was meant to mark the superior *importance* of this part of the Law of Moses. For this reason it alone survives in the Gospel as part of the law of Christians.

Yet there would be a great defect in this last statement if we were to omit a certain exception, inattention to which has perhaps caused the general misapprehension to which reference was made just before. There are certainly two brief sentences, in widely separated parts of that merely written law, and given rather in an incidental way, which are greater, older, and more general in authority than the Ten Commandments. In fact, those Commandments, and all else in the Word of God and the duty of man, are included in them. Of this as a fact there can be no question among Christians as soon as they attend to the words of their Lord in the Gospels (St. Matt. xxii. 38-40, etc. etc.).

This is without doubt one of the profound mysteries of what is all a Divine mystery transcending human understanding. But it is conclusive as to the law of Moses being (in that Will of God which was preparing through all this history the Advent of the Saviour of men) in some respects a narrowing and lowering of the primitive and perfect Religion. It is really no more so in this than in the very fact of its being the religion for only one small nation, instead of for all mankind, while 'the nations sit in darkness' so long; or than the considerable obscuration and neglect of the life to come in this same religion of the



Israelites. It is altogether unreasonable to reject the *fact* because it is mysterious (or rather because it runs counter to a presupposed theory of 'development'). All such objections fall at once before the principle, well established in Chap. III., that we are to understand everything in the Old Testament from the point of view of Our Lord's words in the Gospel.

It seemed good to Him at this step in the History of Religion to leave the two cardinal laws of *love*, as it were, in a sort of aside position, and to place before this chosen people's eyes, with most sublime and awful emphasis, as the centre and soul of their religion, ten great rules of conduct,—His chief commandments then. Each of these had always been indeed one of the main matters of good life according to God's Will (see p. 222). Yet even in the very form of them now was set something which indicated that they were not limited to that people and that age of the world. Still it was His purpose that when the spiritual kingdom of the Gospel, of which Israel was only a foreshadow—and to be of most importance as a historical illustration of that in *its* day—was set up, even in all its greater light and power, these Ten Commandments were to be taught and kept as one of the great lessons of duty.

The event which was now in one aspect to enlarge the true Religion from a family to a nation, was in another, for the time, to contract it from the common blessing of all nations to the special privilege of one. In this mysterious adjustment to 'the hardness of men's hearts,' great emphasis was placed upon the Only and True God being '*the* God of Israel,' which really did not deny, or even obscure, His being the 'Maker of *all* things—Judge of *all* men,' but was a further appeal to the devotion of those of whom He says that He is 'not ashamed to be called *their* God,' for whom He does special 'wonders' of favour, gives them better laws than any other nation had, and for many ages keeps them in this favour, in spite not only of their weakness of good purpose, but of their frequent perverse and obstinate disobedience.

In the First Commandment we have this set in great prominence: 'I am the Lord (Jehovah) thy God, Which have

brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before Me.' As this was that same 'Jehovah' Whom they and their fathers had before worshipped as the Creator and only real God, they of course knew that this no more implied that He was only a patron-god of this new and small nation—while Apis and Osiris were in like manner the true gods of Egypt (or Dagon of the Philistines)—than *I* mean this now, when I call Him '*My God.*' This *appropriation* of Him by every devout soul has a great and beautiful meaning, which entirely agrees with His being the Only God, and the God of *all*.

The Second Commandment has less that can be observed as local or temporary. So far from being any concession to the actual associations of that people, or to any growing habits, 'hardening their hearts' against earlier and nobler thoughts, it is set in most direct opposition to all that notion of *representative* worship by which any sort of religion of or with *images* can be excused. This of itself shows the falseness of some men's theory, that Moses used the religious notions of the Egyptians in framing a religion for the Israelites. On the contrary, this Voice from Heaven refers them to their own old Religion and that of their fathers, and to what they had long known by tradition of the displeasure of that Only God Whose Voice they now hear, as *the reason* for their avoiding with abhorrence this religion of 'graven images,' which prevailed in all the rich and powerful nations.

The special warning given in this Commandment against its transgression is so far from being meant only for that people, that this is the greatest announcement we have in all the Holy Scriptures of a most important *fact* as to all mankind. We are reminded that men's wrong acts do not injure only themselves, or those of their own generation, but descend by a kind of unhappy inheritance to their later posterity. Yet, while this Most Majestic, Only, and Almighty God is so severe in that way to men as sinners, He is far *more gracious* to us *and our children*, in degree as we leave this hatred of Him (which all evil-doing implies), and try to return to loving Him in keeping His Commandments. While He 'visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the

third and fourth generation,' He 'shows mercy unto *thousands* (of generations?) of them that love Him.' His punishing justice in that way is very terrible, but His sweet graciousness to humble and penitent souls, and those dear to them, is as a *thousand* to *three* or *four* of the other. Let us *reflect* that we now have the Divine word LOVE, uttered most powerfully from the clouds, flames, and thunders of Sinai. This Commandment is therefore a very spiritual one, surviving in all its force as the law for Christians.

The Third might seem to a thoughtless reader of our time merely Jewish, and now obsolete. It tells only of a word; and what are words? But in degree as one is deeply and wisely religious, with such penitence, humility, and reverence as become us in any of our thoughts about God, we shall see that this is far otherwise. While anything which we can see used to represent Him in our worship would degrade that worship, and is strictly forbidden us in the preceding Commandment, there are certain words which are holy, and even Divine, which do rightly represent Him Whom we adore. The whole religion of Israel is full of glory to the *Name* of God. The Gospel accepts this, and in fact greatly exalts it in the mystery of the 'Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity.' It is 'at the *Name* of Jesus' that 'every knee shall bow.' It is a part, the greatest part, of that deep wonder, of the conjunction of language and thought in all that is greatest in human life. It was therefore a right tradition of the Jews which understood this Commandment always as not a mere prohibition of false oaths, but as requiring such reverence for God as present in every mention of His Name. So this is an eternal law of religion. It is the bulwark of all real reverence. Show us a man or a people by whom that Name is not uttered with more reverence of thought and act than other words, and we have one that is 'without God in the world' in that degree, as to real thought and real love of Him. There is no limitation of this Commandment in its nature to the Israelites and their age. To each of us, to every soul, He is 'the Lord Thy God.'

The same thing is true in a very high degree of the Fourth. It is certainly from want of sufficient consideration

that some otherwise thoughtful Christians have taken this to be the one of the Commandments which was then new, arbitrary, national, and temporary, for the people of Israel, to cease with the Gospel, or at least not to survive for Christians. For if there were nothing at all in the history preceding to suggest this, any one of us would be wise to ponder the question, why it was that God's Voice should utter from Heaven, among the few great principles of piety and virtue that were as a whole to survive in the Gospel, when all that was limited to the nation Israel passed away, a matter of mere weekly ritual. In this view we might far rather expect the great feast of the Passover (if not the other yearly solemnities) to be so honoured. But actually finding in the sublime words of the Voice of God a reference of its occasion to what the Lord did in the Creation, and to what is written in the Divine History of that, he would be quite decided that this was probably something 'made for man,' as such, and not merely enjoined upon Israelites in their temporary polity. In fact, this is *the one* of the Ten Commandments which has that supreme stamp of the primitive and universal truth. It is *the one* of them that refers back to the beginning of mankind, and gives us the 'reason why' they should keep holy a certain part of their time; that then—when He had completed this universal world, and crowned all the rest of that Creation by making man in His own image—He hallowed each seventh day.

On the other hand, that which was national for Israel, and so temporary, though not surviving in the great 'people of God,' 'out of all nations and kindreds and tongues and peoples' in the Church, would seem to be the sole mention here of rest from labour, and describing this among an agricultural people, and one among whom slavery was a matter of course—'thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant,' etc. etc. The idea of *God's hallowing* time must surely mean much more than ordering the mere cessation of toil. When He Who made us to love Him in all we do consecrates a certain part of our time, and commands us to 'keep it holy,' our reverent thought must be at once of worshipping Him—of thoughts and words about Him—for which this pause in the toil of ordinary life for its needs, gives us the precious opportunity, which might otherwise be continually snatched from

us by what seem the needs, and certainly are the temptations, of worldly care or of the hope of gain.

It is, I believe, a traditional fact that all the best of the Israelites in their best days understood that the ceasing of labour on the Sabbath was not for mere idleness or amusement, but in order that this might be above all a day of religion. And then there is a remarkable passage of the prophet Isaiah (lviii. 13) which was not the Word of God only to the men of Judah, or of that time, but also, though it may have been pressed out of its due sense and proportion by some zealous Christians, is a valuable proof of how this part of God's law was always to be understood by His people. In describing that righteous life of a true Israelite, which would bring the favour of God upon His people, He says this of the Fourth Commandment: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day: and call the Sabbath a delight: the holy of *the Lord*, honourable; and shalt honour Him: not doing thine own ways, or finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words,' etc. That this describes keeping the Sabbath holy with a fervent love of God, in a devout use of that time for special worship and thoughts of Him, seems beyond any candid question.

The Fifth Commandment is allowed by all to be universal and perpetual,—as much God's Word to Christians as to the Israelites then. Yet it has a local and temporary reference which the Fourth has not. Without the deeper sense of all the Commandments, as subject both to the primitive truth and to the subsequent Law of God in the Gospel, we might reason that this one had to do only with that promised country of Canaan, first beginning with it now in prospect before the host of Israel, but ceasing for those (that is almost all the true Israel of Our Lord) whose days have nought to do with that land. For does it not give, as all the reason for its obedience, 'that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee'? Yet, as we know that this honour to parents is the duty of all children 'from the beginning,' so it was and is for those to whom that literal promise has no application since. But, retaining now in the Church every word of its original form, we may rightly transfer those

last words to the greater 'land flowing with milk and honey,'—the heavenly rest of our eternal life.

The Sixth to Eighth are evidently laws which began with mankind, and belong to them always and everywhere. The Ninth is also such in substance. In form here it is only against false testimony in public justice. It is however the just understanding of it, that it forbids all falsehood. This is a principle of true Religion. All attempts to uphold genuine truthfulness in its sanctity, as merely a matter of 'morals,' fail. It is only by a sense of the all-seeing truth of God, and obedient love to Him in this, that the insidious temptations of falsehood—for selfish advantage, to escape harm, or to gain credit with others—can be really overcome. All religions contain some trace of the primitive truth in precepts about this. But these sayings are all overborne in the main by evil examples and allowances of falsehood even on the part of the 'gods,' or by acts of worship that nullify the few words of law. This fact has sometimes been untruly accounted for by 'the genius of different races,' as that the German and Gothic stock is more truthful, the Latin races less firmly so, though more amiable, while the Orientals and others are the lowest of all in this, having little 'moral sense' of truth for its own sake. But this is fanciful and false itself. How came it that these Hebrew writings, alone before the Coming of Our Lord, maintain from beginning to end the only high, spiritual, unwavering, religious idea of 'truth in the inward parts'? The mere genius of the race among whom these writings first appeared is rather artful—fruitful in falsehood for selfish gain. The only explanation, and the truth of this all, is that mankind 'fell' from the love of truth in God, as in all other things; and that, except as by His Word and grace we are restored from this, 'we all go astray as soon as we be born, speaking lies.' 'Philosophy,' in the few whom it can influence, is no match for this tendency: witness Plato. 'Enlightened self-interest,' pride of honour, indeed all other 'bases of morals,' 'scientific' or sentimental, give way to the strain—except so far as there is some actual thought, even if denied by the subject of it, of the 'One Lawgiver,' Who is truth itself, and Who has commanded men to be truthful. The true Religion is alone

consistent and spiritual about this. As suggested above, it is a gratuitous lowering of this Commandment to limit its force to the false *swearing* which it specifies. That is in the false direction of a like error noted as to the Third (see p. 415), and which in fact would destroy all distinction between those two. The actual lowering in it now is rather in the term 'thy neighbour' (near one), in this Commandment as well as in the Tenth, which that people would then naturally enough understand, at the utmost (and did so in fact, most of them), of their own nation. The Egyptian oppressor of the past or the Canaanite enemy of the future did not seem to them *near* in any such sense. Not that God's words in His Commandment or elsewhere told them that. But, on the contrary, in Moses largely, and in all the later prophets, were written things to remind them that their Lord was also the God and Father of all men, to whom, for this reason, they were to be just, kind, and truthful. Still, here we have another mark of that temporary limitation of His truth in the Ten Commandments, which He chose to show, even in this most spiritual part of 'the law,' until He should come to restore the complete 'grace and truth.' Then we have Him, even in some of His earliest teachings, extending the term 'neighbour' to all its primitive breadth (see St. Matt. vi. 42, vii. 12; St. Luke x. 36, etc.), and just before His Passion restoring the two 'great' Commandments to their fulness and supremacy (St. Matt. xxii. 38-40, etc. etc.).

The same things may be observed in the Tenth Commandment, though in some respects the most spiritual of all those which regard our fellow-men (so St. Paul reminds us, Rom. vii. 7), and the guard against the attempt of a mere worldly compliance with the words. For in this is even such a specification of the objects of desire as would sound strangely out of place to almost all men now, except for the spiritual and evangelical extension of those words which the Church of God has always taught.

## CHAPTER XVII.

OTHER RELIGIONS—B.C. 1800-1500.

IN what position, then, does religious thought stand among mankind for this period from the Patriarchs to Moses? As to much the greater part of them, it is not at all changed. They proceed, in their different religions and nations, in the same general process as before. For almost all their people the primitive truth of the One God, and of men's need to seek His mercy, is more and more perverted and obscured. Mere guilty fears join with guilty passions to invent more 'gods,' who are a compound of the imaginations of men and the actual unseen power of demons (see p. 337). When art develops, it finds religion its chief subject, not only in the building of temples and in adorning them with pictures and symbols of its thoughts, but in actual images of the deities adored, most of the worshippers thinking of nothing beyond the very image, making prayers, and sacrificing to it as a Divine person.

In this, and so affecting the religion of all, mingles the ambitious talent of painter, sculptor, and architect, as also of poet and priest, who devote themselves to these subjects. The lawgiver and the monarch join their imperious or kindly power with it. The necessary alliance of Religion with all public order and private peace is thus observed, though it is not understood. Great nations have great religions, in pomp and costliness. The more intellectual nations give it a tinge of that quality. Smaller countries and wandering tribes or coarse barbarians adjust it to their cases. With some it seemed to travel fast and further away from pure truth, and fell into horrid cruelties and despicable follies of belief. Wars and conquests were causes of this,



and in turn results from it, and forces giving it new turns and combinations. Some of the nations went so far from their original seats that they were lost in others quite strange to them, or got quite out of reach of all human neighbourhood, and were found, after ages of such isolation, to have developed strange extravagancies of religious fancy quite unlike anything elsewhere. In some tribes where life in all its other needs was precarious and scanty they went down fast in the scale of Religion, as well as of all that was physical, and seemed to the first civilised discoverers to have no thought of worship, of spiritual goodness, or of right and wrong.

We may fairly conclude that the like causes were at work as described in the account of the preceding age (Chapter XI.) If we had any real history of the Pagan nations, or any of them, for this period, then we should go directly there. But absolutely we have none such. From the first of our kind down to Moses we have had the Hebrew history to follow. In this we have found allusions and episodes as to some other tribes, races, countries. Putting these with some remains of buildings, inscriptions, laws, and traditions, we get glimpses of their religion. But our main resort after all must be to the inferences from a comparison with these of later facts when real history begins, and in following that clue of the general process of change from primitive truth, given to us by the Word of God, specially in the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (see also *supra*, Ch. XII.). Like all great deserts, that awful waste of History has its impressiveness in its silence.

But if we try and add such conjectures of the details of religious thought and observance in some of those nations as are at all reasonable, we may notice among these the Egyptians, Chinese, Hindus, Assyrians, Phœnicians, etc. Everything goes to show that the Egyptians continued in the main the same absurd religion as Abraham found among them. If there was any change in the knowledge of spiritual primitive truth, supposed to be still retained among some of the priests and nobles, it was probably growing less distinct. Of the Chinese we can still only take the state of their

present religion, and for the later centuries of the Christian Era, as European discovery has recorded these, and so much of their very doubtful ancient history as accords with these. So their characteristic in the general degradation is, we may suppose, still (and increasingly so) to have more physical comfort and less spiritual elevation, more law and less worship, more morals and less religion than the other Pagan nations.

The Hindus have, if anything, even less history for this period, notwithstanding the high and confident assumptions of the Phil-Sanscrits of our day. The difference of fact between anything inferred from the Vedas, or argued out of some Sanscrit words, and the actual religion of any considerable part, if any at all, of the Hindus, in the period from Abraham to Moses, will probably amuse some future generation quite as much as the notions of Selden about the Hebrew language now do amuse Professor Max Müller.

Buddhist religion, however many adherents it now has, was not invented for a thousand years yet. The religions of the Assyrians, Phœnicians, and other Syrians, are only known by their remains (of only conjectural date) and the incidental mentions of the Hebrew history, that they continued in the former superstitions, idolatries, and immoralities, as a part of their religion. Doubtless in the lapse of these ages some changes took place. Older deities were sometimes supplanted by new 'imagination'; often it was really but a change of name. State- or priest-craft, poetry, ambition, war, and trade, brought in novelties, some of which became fixed and perpetuated in the popular worship. On the other hand, some of the primitive truth remained, not by chance or inertia, but by that same incessant loving-kindness of God which 'waited,' not only 'in the days of Noah,' but also of Abraham, Moses, David, and the Prophets. For while in the wonderful redemption of all mankind, one family and then one nation are kept from that dreadful development of 'vain imaginations,' the rest are not forgotten or left to abandon all religion and righteousness.

In the same way, what we know of the Persians in this period, is very little. We infer rather from much later events than anything else, that the thought of God as One

and as a Spirit to be worshipped spiritually (yet not without much gloomy superstition as to an evil Lord, other malignant demons and magic), was lasting longer among them than with the environing nations. That conjecture as to the time of Zoroaster, which makes it earliest (with any shade of reason), does not make him to have lived until long after Moses. So that the Zend is a much later writing than the 'Pentateuch'; and Zoroaster's thus or otherwise restoring in any degree the older and purer Religion, against the encroachments of idolatry and other superstitions, must have been long after the period now before us.

Of course we are left even more to mere inference from what was known later as to the nations around the Mediterranean Sea, and in Northern Europe, South Africa, the Americas and the Islands.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rawlinson's *Religions of the Ancient World* is a valuable summary of research into this subject for general reading. Yet it utterly omits the Chinese, Japanese, and other Buddhist nations, which are as 'ancient' as India, if they have no Oxford Professor to transmute their legends and language into fictitious history; and besides, they probably included many more of mankind then, as they do now. I am far from finding fault with the learned Canon, to whom I am much indebted for facts, and whose purpose in writing did not require the universal range which the present inquiry demands.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ISRAEL, THE 'PEOPLE OF GOD'—MOSES TO SAMUEL.

FROM this time on, say 3400 or 3500 years ago, and for many ages after, the true religious tradition proceeded in a quite correct if somewhat narrow channel. It could now be read, as well as talked of from father to son. It, as well as the corrupt religions of great nations, has now a priesthood, a solemn and costly ritual, and civil laws and government adjusted to the Religion, forming indeed one system. It is not the invention of one man, or of all the great men of the people combined. It is not even in its details the growth of generations, in which experience, accidents, public events, and personal ambitions work out a system. This might be, and probably was, true of all other national religions as to their peculiar forms. But *because* God Himself provided this to be a protest against all such follies—a barrier placed in the midst of History against these tendencies destructive of the truth,—it was provided complete for one people, and set up among them with great miracles to attest it as Divine. And then, too, such miracles were performed among them afterwards from time to time, to renew among them the memory of this great fact, of God's authority for their religion, and to vouch for other Prophets whom He sent. For in the following generations He added to His Word given by Moses, as Moses himself had foretold should be. Sometimes these later Prophets only declared God's Will about public events of their time. Or, in some such cases, if their teachings were in substance more moral and religious, we do not know of these ever having been written down. But others of them were inspired as much as Moses was, to write this Word of God for all time to come. And so we have the rest of the Old Testament.

In all this range of a thousand years, anticipating for the latter half of this what belongs rather to Chapter XIX. (during which the Hebrew is the only real history, something *like* its complete and continuous records then only *beginning* to be found elsewhere), there is no superseding of the Law of Moses in its substance, and scarcely in any detail of ritual or public law. (Of course I do not in this deny what that History most plainly tells—much disobedience of that law by its subjects, and sometimes general revolt, even continuing for a long time. But its authority, even in the worst of such defections, is maintained at least secretly by a determined few,<sup>1</sup> and is afterwards as generally acknowledged, and without the suggestion of a right to alter any of its details upon any pretence whatever.) After a while there is an entire change in what we now call the 'form of government' (civil), from an aristocratic democracy led by God's Prophets and hereditary Priests to a monarchy only limited by that Law and Religion. And afterward there is a complete conquest of the country by great heathen nations, after which the people never again have a real national self-government. Yet the religion remains the same, and the laws of Moses are as rigidly insisted upon as ever 1500 years after him, that is, as long as it is now from the days of Constantine. This is even now kept up in all parts of the world by little companies of Jews by race, though for nearly 2000 years it has ceased to be a true religion, God Himself having dismissed it to make way for His complete Word in the Gospel. The true Israel is the Church of Jesus Christ, and the only lawful inheritors of and true believers in the Old Testament now are those who use it as the introduction to the New.

While the Holy Scriptures in Hebrew which were added to the Book of Moses did not change that Law, they were far from being small in amount or importance. On the contrary, they make up now two-thirds of the Old Testament, and are as valuable in that proportion. They disclosed more and more to the old Israel the spiritual meaning of that Law, and prophesied of the great Religion and Salvation for all mankind, for which this was only a preparation. In the nature of the

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* 'I have left me seven thousand men in Israel' (1 Kings xix. 18). 'Even also at this present time there is a *remnant*,' etc. (Rom. xi. 5).

case, no one then could apprehend that meaning as we who have received that last and complete Word of God, the Gospel, may now find it throughout the Old Testament, but especially in the Psalms and certain parts of the Prophets. The Book of Job, the writings of the kings, David and Solomon, and of the Prophets who are usually so specially named, as well as the Books of History after the death of Moses, containing many like lessons, do thus expound and expand the spiritual teachings of the Law. Yet they by no means contradict it or change it in any point.

This is another disclosure of what has been already shown (see p. 354), that the religion of the Old Testament is not at all a 'development' or 'evolution,' as some fancy, according to a universal spiritual 'law,' by which a lower life is always of itself proceeding to something higher than itself. On the contrary, nothing else in the writings of these 1000 years ever exceeds, if it ever quite reaches, the height of a sentence written by Moses himself (see *supra*, p. 412). We have absolute authority for saying all this (beside the intrinsic grandeur of the words, which the more they are studied, and the more points of view taken to survey them from, the greater they appear) in their citation by the Most High Word of God Himself when He was in the world to 'bring in everlasting righteousness' (Dan. ix. 24). That they were probably taken by the journeyers to Canaan then, and by the nation afterwards in a much narrower sense than really belongs to them, does not detract from this. They believed—they knew that Jehovah, their God, was the Only God, and so the God of all the nations. If anything had brought them to consider whether really this love of God was not also a law for the heathen, they would have had to admit it. But nothing ever did lead them to think of this. They were all absorbed in their struggle as a people against 'peoples greater and mightier than they,' in which they represented the True God, and their adversaries the abominable and deadly corruptions of religion which had come in with the Fall. So He was 'their God,' something as the hideous demons and idols of their enemies were theirs; and their only thought was to love Him as the One Who gave them victory over the rest of men. This also helped to keep them more apart from

those false religions, and to preserve the true one in the world until He should come Who is altogether 'the Way and the Truth and the Life' of all men.

The Book of Job also, which, as well as we can judge, is even earlier than Moses, is full of such refined and elevated thoughts which are far above anything of Plato or Cicero. Even leaving out the noble discourses of Job and his friends, the very story at its beginning thus describes the thoughts and words of a good man who had suddenly fallen from the greatest wealth and hope into terrible poverty and bitter bereavement. 'Then Job arose, etc., and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' This was 500 years before the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. Is there any poetry of Homer's equal to it? It is more than a thousand years back in 'barbarism' before *The Dialogues*. Is there anything so sublimely and spiritually wise in all Plato? Some who have followed that notion of Holy Scripture being a 'development' seem also to have carried along with it a desire thus to account for the strange vicissitudes of true Religion as related in the Book—the wrong notions at times of the 'people of God'—and their mistakes of the meaning of His Word; their utter defection from it at other times. But, apart from the general folly of our insisting (as a condition of our belief) upon understanding all this, is it not all meant as a history of facts 'for our learning' by example? Yet this does not imply that it is an example for imitation. Some of the older and in the main very sound expositors of the History may have given this erroneous turn to the thoughts of their successors, by fancying that the instructive example of the old Israel was to be one of perfect obedience to a Divine law, by which we were to learn how with like exactness to follow the better law of the Gospel.

Yet there is no suggestion in the Old Testament of such a lesson, but quite the contrary. And the New in like way implies this, and even, as we shall see, directly says so (see p. 428). We are not told that the need of a 'new and better covenant,' between God and man, was shown by the

failure of the old to serve that purpose, though *perfectly observed*. But a wonderful picture of History for fifteen centuries is unrolled before us, in which is shown in practice the continual failure of almost all this favoured people to love God and keep His commandments—shown with a variety and power of illustration, both for societies of men and for each several soul, that is full of profit to us all,—as fresh and fruitful now as it was in the first ages of the Church.

This being so, is it not a great mistake to insist upon rejecting the history as we now have it in the Book, and making a new one adjusted to the theory—that whatever was commanded at the first was always done exactly? If that were so, we should have no such *instructive* history as we do have. This is as true of general and long-continued neglect of some of those commands, as of the more striking instances given in the History itself of some such offences which were punished by public authority or by miraculous judgments of God. So that, for instance, to raise doubts about the Law of Moses having been known in the time of Samuel, because of some general neglects of it, which are rather implied by the History, is contrary to the whole purpose of the History as example. With these chronicles of the people of Israel, and their evident uses in these ways, the vast stream of illustration of all matters and questions of Religion, with which it has been flowing for ages, and is now in every Sunday's sermons and other instructions in the Church, it is fair to judge that a wise and devout man reflecting upon it would have *inferred* that such a strange and varied history of the former 'people of God' was *meant* by Him to teach His greater people by example of *warning*. But when we also have that express statement, and much else like it, in which the whole of the Old Testament, but especially the general defections of Israel, is evidently in the view of the writer: 'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come' (1 Cor. x. 11), etc., it is decisive.

If any one still inquires: 'Why then is it not said in the History, of every such general neglect of anything in the



old Law, which appears, say in the days of Samuel, that it was such a transgression?'—apart from the transgression of reverence and humility on our part in such demands of what God's Word shall say—we have but to consider that this in itself would be a departure from that artless way of narrative which is such a charm in those histories, and, what is also a part of the teaching for us, that we are to learn the great lesson by thought and with obedient faith.

The other notion is not unaccountable. It is one of the natural effects of trying to adjust religious faith to Philosophy. In our times this attempt follows the general notion of a 'development' and 'evolution,' which is to be discovered and understood by us in all things. So there is supposed to be a need of applying it to the Divine History also.

That is a very important matter as to our present investigation. Therefore we must now again, for what is yet before us, take time and pains sufficient to have a clear understanding of it. By that means we shall go on intelligently in the use of this History, and not be drawn aside to doubt its genuine meaning, and to invent more or less plausible theories of its authorship, and of some other meaning in the facts related. I do not see how any one can otherwise fairly use that History for instruction as to the Church in general, or as to the events of our own individual spiritual life; as in fact we all do use it so much to our profit. But still less do I see how the plain words of St. Paul in the tenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians (verses 6 and 11), and other passages of the New Testament quite equivalent, can be otherwise fairly construed. So that all the supposed omissions and inconsistencies of that History, upon which some unthinkingly seize as grounds for their guessing out another history than that which we read, are just such mysteries as the common sense of reverence and faith ought to expect in that wonderful instruction of History.

'No,' says some one, 'that would not be a development. Therefore the true history must be thus and thus—*e.g.* that some one long after Moses invented what is related in his Books as we simply read them in our Bible.' And so the

Prophets were not trying to recall their people to the old truth neglected and disobeyed, to the old spiritual meaning unnoticed, but were bringing in altogether new ideas in advance of the old,' etc. etc. So much the worse, then, for the misleading notion of a 'development.'

As we now rapidly follow the history of true religious thought, we thus have it almost entirely confined to the Israelites. And among them it is almost all fixed upon maintaining that there is only One True God, and that He is to be worshipped with great awe, 'in spirit,' without images, as altogether unseen, and as a holy King, Who commands us to be truthful, pure, just, and merciful, will not accept worship from the selfish, perverse, and impenitent, 'and will by no means clear the guilty.' Other great parts of the true Religion—as the thoughts of a general Resurrection and Judgment after death, and a future life, to be determined by that Judgment—seemed left rather in abeyance, implied rather than enforced. But the thought of all men's needing the pardon and grace of God, as sinners against Him from their very birth, was kept more constantly than ever before their minds by their Ritual; in that the sacrifice of beasts—which had begun with the first of the race, as a figure of some great atonement for the sins of mankind, and had been kept up through all the ages of the Patriarchs—was made more frequent and solemn. At the very same time it was more and more perverted in all false religions into silly or bloody superstitions.

But it would not be possible for us to learn well this far greatest matter of the history of Israel—the preservation of primitive religion in the world until the Redeemer of all mankind should come—without some attention to its political history. That God has given us that lesson interwoven with the other facts is reason and need enough for the study. If we tried to discard the political history in exclusive devotion to the religious, we should only weaken and confuse our apprehension of the latter.

And beside this, it is itself a lesson of the essential connection of Law and Religion, of men's duties as Christians and as citizens. So he is the wisest reader of the Old Testament history, and will learn best what it was meant to teach

a Christian who takes it literally and simply as a record of facts, yet never forgetting that its truth is best seen from the point of the Gospel.

For our present purpose, however, there is need of a brief mention of the secular side of the history of Israel. God gave also to that people—inspiring Moses to reveal this with the Commandments of righteousness and rules of religion—a civil government and laws. As this is far the most ancient body of such laws extant, so it far exceeds in justice and practical advantage to the people any other such of antiquity. Its principle is throughout the one true one for legislation, of the love of God and man. And while it is an agreed part of Christian doctrine that its authority was only for that people and age, and terminated by its own limitation with the end of the Jewish nation as such, wise modern legislators have often studied it for suggestions in matters with which they had to deal. And all thoughtful students of its provisions have been struck with the more than human wisdom of its details.

The 'form of government' also then set up was also without an example or a suggestion elsewhere. Nothing could be less Egyptian. It is commonly called a 'theocracy' or God-government. No one man had absolute and despotic power of laws and penalties, war, taxation, and every other private as well as public affair—as a 'Pharaoh'—and even worshipped as a 'god.' And no thin layer of superior families stood just below the sovereign, engrossing from generation to generation all that was left of wealth, honour, and power. The One God, great, awful, holy, and unseen, was King. The people were all alike honourable, as being of kindred and equal birth. But first Moses himself as a Prophet of God administered these just laws with the help of the heads of all the families, and sometimes with special counsels of the priests of the Holy King.

Then Joshua succeeded to that presidency by God's appointment, as the heroic soldier and prophet who led them into Canaan for the conquest of the Pagan tribes, and distribution of their lands equally among all the families. Afterwards for some three or four hundred years, no one man seems to have been recognised in that lofty place, except as occasionally in great general distress from adverse war, some such

prophets and heroes arose among them for the emergency.

This period of 'the Judges' is indeed one of the most mysterious parts of the history of Israel. It seems for one thing to be a lesson of the evils of anarchy—that is, the lack of responsible, vigorous, and acknowledged authority executing laws, without which the laws, however good, do not of themselves make a people good and happy. This people of Israel certainly were perverse and ungodly; and without doubt their subjugation and oppression by Pagan nations around were caused by their unfaithfulness to the Great One Who had chosen them out to be specially *His* people. It is not possible to conceive of anything of the sort more mean, silly, and disgraceful.

The Israelites were indeed to be as a people, from that time forth until the Coming of the Great 'Son of Man,' the only true priests and Kingdom of God among men. But they were suffered, if they so chose at any time, to depart from this great blessing and 'be as the heathen' around them. They were to learn (and still more to teach all men by the example of their history), by a bitter experience of such sin, of punishment and repentance for it, to be firm and faithful in religion. They went through one such experience even just after the Law was first proclaimed to them, and before all its details were given.<sup>1</sup> They seemed then suddenly eager to imitate the bad religion of their Egyptian oppressors, but received a terrible and effectual cure for that. Other like things occurred while Moses was still their commander and prophet, and before they were fairly settled in Canaan.

Then for hundreds of years afterwards there were many such apostasies and repentances. False religion was continually tempting them by means of the tribes of idolatrous Canaanites, who still kept a foot-hold in various parts of the country. The true religion resisted these influences with the Book of Moses, and the rites and laws observed according to it. But God also, from time to time, and especially when their enemies greatly oppressed them, made some great men, heroic or eloquent, to be His Prophets to them. The Holy Ghost inspired them to give His messages to their country-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii.

men, and sometimes to be their military heroes, in defeating the heathen oppressors and expelling false religion from Israel. The last and greatest of this class of prophets, Samuel, was not a soldier, though the leaders in war acted under his directions. But he was a man of heroic courage, and of spotless public and private virtue, and devoted to true religion. When he was an old man the 'public opinion' of the Israelites demanded a king, such as the neighbour nations all had, to be their leader in war and 'fountain of honour' in peace; and to transmit this supreme power to his eldest son. This the Prophet of God granted in His Name; and so came about a great change in the civil order of Israel. The first king, Saul, though in personal appearance and qualities all that would gratify the popular wish, did not have a happy reign in any sense. He was brave and generous, but very proud and self-willed; and so disobeyed the Will of God as made known to him by the old Prophet. Naturally enough then he became envious, bitter, and rash. And so he perished with the flower of his people in a disastrous battle with heathen enemies. A son succeeded Saul over part of the kingdom, and for a short time. But the real second king of Israel, and founder of a long and famous line, was David, whom God had been for some years bringing and training from his boyhood as a shepherd in the hill-country (south of Jerusalem), to be one of the great soldiers of Israel. Saul came to notice his exploits and merits, and at first to honour him greatly. Afterwards he became the chief object of that king's bitter jealousy—a fugitive and an exile. Yet at Saul's death he was at once hailed by many of his countrymen as their true champion and king. After some years all the people came to recognise David as the one whom God meant for this.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### OTHER RELIGIONS—B.C. 1500-1000.

FOR the same lack of real history as we have noted in the period before this (see Chap. XVII. p. 421) this chapter can be but a brief repetition of that same 'sitting in darkness' of false religion of all the nations except Israel. We have only to keep the general process in mind,—to recur especially to the Divine disclosure of it in Romans i. 18, etc., and to note the allusions to Pagan religion in the history of Israel and the Psalms of David. All these suggest a deepening of that darkness as the ages roll away. The traditions of primitive truth grow more faint, or are more perverted. Thus that of sin and sacrifice is made the occasion of more and more laborious and burdensome yet senseless ceremonies, and of gloomy and bloody or else obscene superstitions. The Egyptian remains show this for that most 'civilised' of nations. False religion was even more cruel and filthy among the Canaanites, who were such shameful examples of its bad morals that they were made a dreadful example of God's abhorrence of sins ;—first the horrible Sodomites and Gomorrhahans, and afterwards the other tribes of Canaan, expelled or even exterminated to make place for Israel. Of them the Phœnicians ('they about Tyre and Sidon') were not disturbed, but left to develop in that busy and daring commerce which has its monuments all around the Mediterranean,<sup>1</sup> and to be the allies of the great kings of Israel, and assist in the building of the first Temple of God.

A few of the other Canaanites long remained more or less mingled with the holy nation. This was a part of its

<sup>1</sup> And in which future explorers may yet find even more useful remains of the history of language and of 'Gentile' religion than have yet been traced.

discipline, as even then 'whom the Lord loved He chastened' by afflictions and by trials as to whether they would prefer the evil ways of their neighbours to His blessed commandments. Often they did ; but He loved them too well not to bring them back by severe punishments. Rather He went on with His great purpose of love to all mankind, for which He was keeping this 'a peculiar people.'

As we look out upon the rest of the world from this little fastness of true Religion, we see other nations who were not quite so far gone astray as the old Canaanites. The North and East Syrians, the Edomites or North Arabians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians, were all idolaters, but not so coarse or corrupt as the filthy tribes whom the Israelites dispossessed. Perhaps the Persians should be mentioned entirely apart, as retaining more of the original truth. As we have had occasion to notice, there seems to have been among them, from very remote tradition, a belief in One Good God ; but, along with this, a religion of one evil Lord of equal or greater effective power in this world always warring with the other. The former may have been the only one of the two to whom they actually prayed. But the other was as much feared and propitiated.

This of itself was a great departure from the true Religion. And then, too, they adored the sun and fire,—the more speculative of them said only as the representatives of the Unseen One. But the second of the Sinai Commandments shows that He will not allow this, so that doing it is one sort of ungodliness. And all experience shows that not only will almost all such a people thus directly 'worship the creature rather than the Creator,' but that these philosophers themselves will really do much the same. Any way, the better part of the Persian religion faded away, and the false worship absorbed almost all.

It is possibly before the end of this period (but more probably in the following one) that what some think a great movement in Religion began among the Persians. It was caused by the appearance of Zerdusht (Zoroaster) and his writing the *Zend*. This has been already somewhat anticipated in Chapter XI., p. 305, etc., to which I again refer my

readers. It found a place there as necessary to show what was probably the religion of the Persians, then (B.C. 2000) to be inferred, for one thing, from the older traditions of his people, which that reformer thus tried to maintain against the encroachments of a religion of many gods and of images, which wars and intercourse with the Assyrians and other neighbouring people were introducing among his countrymen. The only thing at all fairly credible is that such true primitive principles of religion still survived among the Persians, and were struggling with surrounding tendencies toward idolatry. The influence upon all this of philosophers and reformers belongs more naturally to the next period (see Chap. XXI.), and will be found treated there.

It may have been also during this period that the Persian ideas came into India, whether brought by a conquering race who drove the older inhabitants, men of more gross religion, into the wild mountain tracts, where they perished, or survived to this day in some small, very barbarous tribes,<sup>1</sup> or conveyed only by travel and trade. Yet we cannot be sure how far these wiser thoughts of the Vedas and the laws of Menu were not the surviving traditions of the first men in India. If what is now read in those writings was then among that people, it is admitted by their European admirers (see M. Müller, *India*, etc.) to have been only by oral tradition. And in that was already mixed much superstitious folly.

So the early Chinese evidently kept some of the truth which was known among all at the dispersion of Babel, but more on the moral than the religious side, so far as that distinction is at all proper. It is also not amiss to notice here that while some of the tribes of men which have lost all historical continuity with these ages,—of whom indeed

<sup>1</sup> Stillingsfleet, *Origines Sacre*, Book iii. chap. 5, 'Origin of Heathen Mythology,' contains whole paragraphs worthy of quotation for this. It would have been, and would be now, a very valuable statement of this whole matter but for the fault, if (see Pref. Note, p. x., etc.) I have rightly apprehended it, of all former writers in treating this subject of primitive religion, and the traditions from it among all mankind, as only an incidental and probable suggestion, instead of its being, as it is, the great fact in all such history, and the key of the whole question of the Beginnings of Religion.



nothing was known in the historical nations until within a few hundred years, are so debased as to seem to have almost no sort of religion—some of them, as, *e.g.*, certain of the North American tribes, have more true and spiritual thoughts of the 'Great Spirit' and a future life than the elegant Greeks and strong-minded Romans in their best days. All this agrees with (and only with) this truth of an original Religion.

## CHAPTER XX.

ISRAEL—DAVID TO DANIEL.

DAVID is one of the greatest characters of history. With much the same personal attractions as Saul, he was far more just, wise, and generous as a king. And, what was much greater, he was one of the most beautifully religious men that ever lived, and used all his royal power and personal influence to promote this among his people. Yet it is an even greater fact in this history of religion that David was a great Prophet of God. He is eminent among those who have had the exceeding great honour, not only to speak in God's Name, but also to *write* what He would say to all mankind. The Psalms of David are such lofty and spiritual expressions of true religion, that they are even a great part of the best worship of Christians. They are full of tender consolations for all sorts of distress. They express true repentance towards God, and the need and longing of each human soul for His forgiveness and gracious help to love and obey Him. They remind us of His vast and ceaseless goodness to us—of His incessant care and power in all events—of His holy justice, truth, and purity—of the littleness of our present life, and of all its desires and cares, compared with what we are to know and to be in another life. In all this, and if possible even more, in expressing that love of God with all the heart which Moses taught to Israel, and which is the very and all-including thing for which Adam was made, and all his sons, David's book is far above all the Indian, Persian, Egyptian, Chinese, or Greek writings which have been discovered. While here and there in them can be found floating—

'in vasto gurgite'

of trivial or misleading notions—some fine sentences which

sound like those of our Scriptures—the Book of Psalms shines all through with exquisite truth and beauty, and some of its sayings, far above man, and drawing him up toward God, none of these other writings even approach. Why is this? Is it because the second King of Israel is such an astonishing genius that Sankyamuni, Plato, and Cicero, with all the gathering refinement of thought for ages afterwards, could not approach him? (For that admired Buddha was the flower of at least four previous centuries of metaphysical thought in India, and there had been a like long preparation for the others named. It was indeed a great genius whom God, Who makes all men as He will, made the chief author of the Psalms.) No; but simply because David was a Prophet of God; and what we read of his is the Voice from Heaven to us all.

This preserving of a peculiar and holy nation to Himself, with a 'Word' from Him, spoken, written, and celebrated in Ritual, and added to from time to time by new prophets, went on for several hundred years longer. The history of Israel was, as before, full of vicissitudes. It was no part of God's Will for the great purpose that this people should be all pure and devout, nor even always faithful in their outward religion. We of the later age of the Gospel were to have in them a picture of all human weakness in this world—even in God's Church. The astonishing perversity of this most favoured people—their defections not only from the spiritual purity of God's law, but from the regulations of worship, of national honour and order, and of justice between men, which He had given to them—is a wonderful picture of the obstinate folly of all mankind. Wise humility sees this now, and can profit much by it. It is only the same rash and blind self-conceit which scorns to be thus taught.

This defection from true religion began even while Solomon reigned. The very power and eminence with other nations which we shall see to be an occasion for God's Word going out among the Pagans made a danger for the Israelites. Their king himself, with all his intelligence and accomplishments, though even a great Prophet of God, was a weak man when his ambition made him marry a daughter of the King of Egypt; and still more so when he went on to gratify both

ambition and lust in having a great harem besides—whether of Pagan slaves or of free-born daughters of Israel. He might despise all these women, as mere toys and slaves for his selfishness, but they would coax and flatter him into the follies of false religion, in which they had been brought up, or fallen into it themselves in such society and real degradation. And he himself, because he was growing selfish and worldly, would seek this ‘refuge of lies’ from the holy law of spiritual and self-denying love.

According to the Will and Wisdom of God, which we often cannot penetrate by any of our conjectures—and most surely not according to our usual theories of such things—Solomon was allowed to reign in unbroken power, and apparent glory and prosperity, to the end of a long life. He seems never to have been molested by foreign war, or to have had any disposition to undertake it against others. But he was not without trouble at home. There were partisan chiefs among his subject Edomites and Syrians, who maintained a sort of independence in the mountain fastnesses of those countries, to his great annoyance. But what was more serious, his unfaithfulness to the true Religion, and his other sins and selfishness, made him abuse his great power over his people. Taxes grew heavier, and liberty was invaded. One bold and able man, whom he had promoted from a low position, upon observing his ability and diligence, seems to have headed a revolt against him, which was at once suppressed; and this Jeroboam escaped into Egypt. The king’s great ability was feared by all, and probably an affectionate pride in this and in the glory and power he had brought to his people, as well as loyal devotion to the ‘house of David,’ may have made most of them rather submit to his severe rule than make resistance. But upon his son and successor at once fell great trouble, in a revolt of the greater part of the nation, and the setting up of a separate and hostile kingdom. Yet the chief importance of this was as it affected the history of religion. The new state of North Palestine, as being much the larger, took the name of Israel; while the part which still continued under the house of David was called Judah, after his tribe, which was the main part of it.

Of course religion was at once largely affected by this.

The Israelites were no longer one nation, and the holy city of Jerusalem and the Temple were in the smaller division. Preparation for building the Temple had been made by David with all his ardour and energy, though to Solomon fell the glory of the actual construction. But this was not the former's greatest service to the stability of Religion. He had taken great pains to organise anew the tribe of Levi, as the ministers of worship and teachers of the Law of God, in their various orders. This re-establishment of the Divine law and ritual as first given by Moses, and substituting the Temple for the great tent or 'tabernacle' in which until then the public worship had been kept up with various vicissitudes—and in a city which God now declared should be most dear and sacred to Him,—was a great event in that History.<sup>1</sup> Its usefulness in keeping the people from neglecting true religion and the Word of God, was now to be most severely tried.

God did not regard this political revolution as a defection from His service. He, indeed, by Prophets had suggested it, as a just punishment of the sins of Solomon, and a part of His great Providence. It was also to be one of those trials of the faithfulness of most of the Israelites which come in the discipline of us all. He considered the men of North Palestine no less Israelites on account of their separation from the dynasty of David. The greatest of His Prophets for hundreds of years after this appeared among *them*; and the mass of that people regarded themselves as His and as amenable to His law. At the same time it was a very peculiar trial of their fidelity, a peculiar history as an example for us.

At once the political question arose whether they were still to resort to the Temple at Jerusalem for the greatest acts of their Religion. This would have been a great practical question if their religion had had no more to do with their politics than ours has now; but far more so when with them Religion and politics had never been separated. The sacred tribe of Levi made their decision at once, now more than

<sup>1</sup> We should remember and consider well that in all this David and Solomon were as much Prophets of God, inspired by Him to act and speak in His Name, thus giving His Word, as Samuel before and Elijah afterward.

ever gathering in and around Jerusalem ; abandoning for this their houses and lands in the other country ; and thus the Ten tribes were left in a still worse condition as to Religion. But the new king of Israel, Jeroboam, had already, and probably without much objection by the people, very astutely for his purpose, set himself to adjust religion to the new politics. So, without at all admitting any defection from 'Jehovah their God,' places were appointed within their own boundaries for the chief worship ; and images set up for this, which was indeed a gross departure from the law of God, but quite useful for the king's purpose. And this in one shape or another never ceased among them after. It seems to have varied with various influences : at first rather like that of Egypt, then more and more adopting that of their nearest neighbours on the north-west, the Phœnicians. Some of the people of Israel still resorted to Jerusalem to worship (2 Chron. xi. 16), and perhaps most of them still continued to hold a sort of allegiance to the true religion. The Prophets who arose among them never spoke or acted otherwise, and were held in general awe and reverence, even when they spoke most severely of the prevailing idolatry and other sins of their people. It was a very strange confusion and inconsistency ; but it endured for hundreds of years.

The like struggle was going on even in the more favoured kingdom of Judah. In this too we have the same picture of an incessant conflict between light and darkness—true religion and false—among the 'peculiar people,' as, *e.g.* there is now. The great difference between them and the rest of mankind then, was that elsewhere there was no struggle—because the false had pretty much all its own way.

The study of this in its details, from Solomon to Zedekiah, is worth all the pains and attention it would require. But we can only for the present purpose, note its most important incident,—that from time to time God added to His former Word by sending Prophets to warn wicked kings or a worldly people of the dangers of the times. Some of these He also caused to *write* their prophecies and thus add to the Holy Scriptures which were to be kept carefully, and to come down as the charge and treasure of His Church, when they would receive an even much greater value as appended to the

New Testament. The history of all this, including the sayings and doings of some of the chief Prophets, was also written by inspiration of God and added to the other Holy Scriptures.

The most remarkable and heroic of the Prophets who left no writings but whose acts and some brief sayings are contained in this history, were Elijah and Elisha, who lived about 200 years after Solomon, and who, as remarked before, were born, lived long lives, and died, not in Judah but in Israel. All these men hesitated not to rebuke the most fierce and wicked kings, and the whole people at their back, for leaving the holy service of God to take up the false religion of other nations. For this was still the perverse way of both these nations, though Judah retained more of the truth, and God had been pleased to make their capital especially 'the city of God,' and thus 'loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.'

Their chief passion of this kind was for the filthy Baal-worship of the Syrians around them, or of the Arabian pagans, Moabites, and others on the south-east, or of the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon on the north.

It was about this time that these sailors and merchants of Tyre, with whom they had had many dealings ever since David and Solomon's day, began to found colonies in the far west, on the Mediterranean shores, in Spain and perhaps Britain, certainly on the North-African coast, at what became afterwards the famous city of Carthage.<sup>1</sup>

It is not amiss, but will help us better to understand this history of Israel, to anticipate Chap. XXI. a little more, and notice that it was then too, that one of the tribes of Central Italy was beginning to gather to it the great power which afterwards became the famous City and Empire of Rome.

<sup>1</sup> All this history shows us in the most natural way how much the Hebrew people were in advance of the Phœnicians as to history, the art of writing and religious thought, and thus how absurd it is to search, as some modern scholars are doing (see *supra*, p. 399) in the few and imperfect Phœnician remains for the beginnings of thought and writing among those who were so far in advance of them. It would be much more reasonable to reverse the process. And this, as we have seen already, is no less true if Selden, Bochart, Gale, and Casaubon did make some little mistakes in their facts and inferences. See also Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacræ*, iii. ch. 5, etc.

In Greece, also, the quick intelligence and poetic genius which had already begun with Homer was pushing out in various ambitions of adventure, art, and thought. In India still went on the same development together, of far-fetched metaphysics and absurd superstition. In China, probably something of the same; though as yet that seemed absorbed in physical contrivance and in the heaping up of worldly wealth. But in none of these regions, or elsewhere on the earth, was there anything like that light of true Religion which God had given and still kept replenishing in Palestine.

Nor was this Word of God to Israel kept entirely from all other nations. Its kings and prophets were not commanded to teach the true religion to the rest of the world, nor ever thought this their duty. But God Himself caused some gleams of that light to shine into 'the dark places of the earth.' One such incident was that of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (see also *infra*, Chap. XXI. p. 469).

This shows that the son of David was so widely famous in all the East, especially for his wisdom, that a powerful sovereign made a journey of probably 1500 miles across Arabian deserts, to make personal acquaintance with him, and to profit by his words. What interests us now most, is that she could not but have thus learned something of the pure and spiritual worship of Israel, and the belief in One Creator and God. That wisdom of Solomon which she came to learn was all interwoven with his religion,—that indeed the main and dominant part of it. Such questions and beliefs carried home by her and her attendants, would be sure to be thought of, and talked of, for long years after. In fact, these agreeing with the most ancient traditions of Southern Arabia, lingering, however vaguely and faintly in some minds, would never quite perish. In some form or effect they would survive always, as we have reason to believe they were found there by the first Christian missionaries in the second, if not even the first century.

Another such incident occurs about a hundred years later. A famous Syrian soldier, whom a tradition, which is at least 1800 or 1900 years old, reports as the very man who killed



the wicked Ahab in battle (see 1 Kings xxii.), became a leper. In one of the forays of the almost continual war between his country and Israel, he had carried off a little maid of that land who was now the favourite attendant of his wife. The Syrian was plainly a good master, and the little Israelite was grieved at his misfortune. So she told her mistress she was sure that if he would go to the great prophet of her country (Elisha, the successor of Elijah, and only second to him in those annals for the miracles which God did by him), he would cure him of his leprosy.

When this came to the ears of Benhadad, the king of Syria, he, with what would be superstitious credulity as to his own false gods and prophets, but wise faith as to the God of Israel, resolved that his favourite Naaman should not miss any such chance of a cure for lack of the attempt. So as there was then peace between Israel and Syria (probably by the acknowledgment of subjection and tribute to Syria by the successor of Ahab after his defeat and death), he sent Naaman to Samaria, with an embassy to this Jehoram, requiring him to have Naaman cured of his leprosy. It was a haughty and unreasonable message, perhaps intentionally careless as to whether the tributary king could comply with it, or be only frightened at such an exaction; making no mention of the prophet, yet certainly hoping that Naaman would be relieved of his dreadful affliction—just this: ‘Behold, I have sent my servant Naaman unto thee that thou mayest cure him of his leprosy.’

And so it fell out. For Ahab’s son, who knew nothing about Elisha in the affair, was only terrified at this requirement, and saw in it merely a freak of senseless tyranny or the pretext for a quarrel. In the midst of his alarm and perplexity, came a message from Elisha, who had heard of this by some means, and sends now to say, ‘Let Naaman come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.’ The Syrian general and his retinue go to the Prophet’s house, who does not come out to receive him, but only sends word that he must go and plunge in the river Jordan seven times. Naaman was at first only disappointed, and very angry at this want of ceremony and attention to him; perhaps at the disrespect to his sovereign and evasion of his wish, in sending

him back to the little Israelitish river which he had but just crossed on his way there. But he is afterwards persuaded by his attendants to put that much faith in Elisha and his God, to make a trial of this simple requirement. Doing so, he is instantly and entirely cured of his dreadful disease.

Then, though well on his way home, he returns at once 'with all his company' to the Prophet and makes this avowal: 'Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.' Then he offers him splendid gifts as a well-earned fee for the cure, and as a part of his homage to the One Only God. When these are positively declined, he makes this remarkable request: that there 'be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord.'

And yet, having no thought that it was his duty to oppose the religion of his own country or hope of changing it, he asks this allowance: 'In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.' Most remarkable of all, this request is *not* refused, but he is told to 'go in peace.' Evidently it was not then the office of a Prophet in Israel to convert other nations from false religion, or to require powerful men in those nations who were converted to the true God, to make that attempt. But it does show that the Great I AM of Israel was the true God of those nations, and that any of their people who came to know this, did wisely for themselves to worship only Him.

It was probably in the last days of Elisha that God caused the first of the later Prophets to write His message, and had this preserved as a part of the Holy Bible for all mankind. This was Jonah. And he is remarkable also among these writers as having given us rather a history of his mission than any predictions or precepts. More than all, it is the most wonderful instance given in all the history of Israel, of God's love and pity for the rest of mankind. This Hebrew Prophet is the one who was not sent at all to his own people, nor even to one of the neighbouring and more

friendly nations, but to a great distant and wicked city, the capital of a powerful people whom the Israelites knew of only as sometimes fierce invaders and oppressors.

The mission of Jonah to Nineveh as related in his book is therefore not only very interesting in itself, but is especially noteworthy in a history of religious thought. It is a glimpse of God's care for the souls of those who sat in religious darkness for the fifteen centuries at least, in which it was the Will of His wise love (*O altitudo!*) to confine His Word to a hundredth part (or less) of mankind.

Good reader, turn to this Book of Jonah, the tenth in order of arrangement of the Prophets in our Bibles, and read for yourself in a page or two a wonderful story, the like of which is not in all other books in the world. This was about 850 years before Christ (a century before the founding of Rome, and longer yet before Buddha appeared in India, or Confucius in China). Yes, it is wonderful. Among that little, hard, and narrow people, the Hebrews, in their wildest, hardest, and narrowest period, was produced and handed down to us a writing not the hundredth part of the amount of the Brahmopadru, telling how the One God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, pitied all the people of idolatrous and sensual Nineveh, and sent an Israelite to preach to them repentance for their sins and pardon from Him. 'Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying: Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. . . . And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and also much cattle?' Between these sentences, in less than four such pages as this is comprised all of that history.

Yet what we see in it! The Great Father, before Whom each soul of us (and even all of us together) is 'as nothing,' and against Whom we are greater sinners than we can even comprehend,—is preparing His Salvation for all men in His own way, by giving a 'Word of God,' for now some thousand years of this history to only a very few of mankind. And there is as great a mystery in His long-suffering with the perversities of those few as in His special favour to them.

But in the midst of this, and longer before the great Gospel for all was to begin in the world than it is now since the Norman Conquest of England, He suddenly sends one of these Hebrews to Nineveh as His messenger of mercy. Now Nineveh represented the rich and prosperous false religion of the world, to the East, as Egypt did to the West. All Syria but most of all, the small Jewish kingdoms, was the prize of conquest between these great and cruel rivals. Of the two you might think that Egypt, as not only the nearer, but once the home of Joseph and shelter of his father and brothers, had more claims to this. Neither had claims, as none of us have, to God's mercy. Nor was His 'fulness of time' come to show that great mercy, and for His Son to die for all. He chose to make this one marked demonstration of love and pity for Pagan sinners.

Soon after this began the long line of other Prophets whose writings are a large part of the Old Testament. The greatest of them, certainly of the earlier ones, Isaiah, flourished within the century after Jonah. He lived and prophesied through several reigns of good and bad kings of Judah. The last of these kings, and one of the best of his line, was Hezekiah, who tried hard to restore the pure law and ritual. He succeeded only in part. The people were so used now to deviations from God's Word, in things great and small, public and private, that a vicious or irreligious king more easily corrupted, than a good one reformed them.

Long before this, however, the kingdom of Israel had ceased to exist. Its strange part in the history of the 'people of God' had been finished. False religion and public calamities, bad kings and a bad people, had ended in Pagan conquest and captivity. Such of the old stock of Israel as were left in the land, not considered of consequence enough to be removed to Assyria, resorted to Judah, or were lost among the new heathen colonists. Out of this last mixture came a sort of Jewish sect, which survives to this day, called the Samaritans, and which has in a strange way been of some service in preserving the ancient Word of God and its proofs.

The writings of the Prophets contain many predictions

and precepts for their own times. But they also proclaim with most eloquent power the spiritual meaning of that old Word of God from the first, including the Law of Moses, not only as the men of the Exodus best understood it, but probably in an increasing degree, as God meant it yet for 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' (or other nations of the earth), a preparation for the Great Gospel of salvation for all men. And in this we should include such of the Psalms as were doubtless added to that Book, after David, by the same Inspiration and Divine authority. There is in the Prophets no disparagement of that Law and opposition to Moses, to the ritual and the Temple, and the whole body of 'statutes,' as Moses himself calls them. On the contrary, they imply a spiritual and heavenly meaning in it all, and a dawning vision of something future which is to perfect and supersede it. [In fact there is nothing in the Prophets more profound and spiritual than much of Moses, and of those Psalms which are evidently David's.] They foretold in a very beautiful and splendid way that there was yet to be a still greater Word of God, and blessedness for all men. Our Lord often refers to them for all this.

Yet it is to these Prophets and this time that some ingenious men now resort for arguments to prove a theory of theirs, that Moses did not write the five books (really one book, see p. 408), received as his, and that no such writings were known at all for eight hundred, if not for a thousand, years after the Exodus. I have carefully examined the alleged proofs for this, and find that, so far as I am capable of judging, they amount to nothing. They give a sort of explanation of certain difficulties of the history; but they raise a great many more.

To exalt the 'Prophets' at the expense of 'the Law,' they put forced constructions upon many passages in both of them. And they assume that at least the four books (Exodus—Deuteronomy), as we now have them, are a bold and yet a most skilful forgery, which imposed upon that whole nation for 2500 years, upon Our Lord and His Apostles, and all Christendom since, until within a hundred years past some European students have found out and exposed it all! Thus it requires more credulous trust in

a few men's guesses in order to believe this new doctrine, than it does of faith in God's Word to keep the old.

And as the Word of God enlarged by these Prophets had more and more to say of the mercy of God to the other nations, and of His greatest blessings, in which they were to have as great a part as Israel, this is not by any accommodation to false religion, such as modern 'Comparative Religion' deals in. On the contrary, it is in Isaiah, and the others of this 'goodly fellowship,' that we have the most powerful exposure of the folly and wickedness of idolatry, and all such superstitions—the most sublime setting forth of the One Only True God.

But no sooner was the good king Hezekiah dead than a wicked son takes his place, and a wicked people rush with him into the imitation of the false religions of their neighbours. It is only after three such reigns, and one of them quite long, that another of the line of David, who loved the true Religion, became king. Josiah was one of those beautiful instances scattered sparingly through History, where a young boy inherits a throne, and instead of mere self-indulgence, leaving it to agents to carry on the government in some bad old way, sets out at once with a virtuous and godly will of his own to be a good ruler. The greatest reform then needed, that of religion, did not begin at first, nor indeed until another though kindred question, causing a search in the records of the Temple, brought out a 'roll of a book' long left unnoticed, the reading of which greatly stirred up its finder. When brought to the notice of the king, then a young man growing up firm and vigorous, he was very much moved. He gave an example to all the rest by every outward demonstration of shame, and of alarm at the dangers into which their departure from the Law of God had brought all the nation.

But he did better yet in decreeing the immediate restoration, as far as possible, of all the holy ritual in the 'book of the Law,' or 'book of the Covenant,' as well as the laws of right between man and man. He attended in person to this, and gave his presence and own speech to a resumption of that Covenant in the purified Temple before a vast assembly of all the priests and princes, and, as far as

possible, all the people. He set himself to destroy, root and branch, all the idolatries and superstitions,<sup>1</sup> and their institutions and places.

It was a vast undertaking for one young man, even a king, and with some brave Prophets and Priests to help him. This actual religion of a people, if it has been rooted for one or two generations as the actual religion of their families and their laws, though we can see that it was very unworthy of them, and utterly out of place with those who had been taken out from among men to represent the true God for a thousand years, is very hard to deal with. And besides, while God had given them the better religion ages before, they had, for most of the time, been really fighting against Him to follow any superstition of Canaanites or Syrians, Egyptians or Assyrians, rather than this beautiful and holy truth.

It is therefore very far from strange that even Josiah did not succeed in a few days in banishing from his land every irregularity out of the hundreds that had been lurking among them ever since the days of Joshua, or in effecting such perfect observance of the Ritual as had likely never been seen since Moses' time. Thus we are told of his first Passover, that even this simplest and greatest of Hebrew feasts had not been as carefully observed since the days of the Judges.<sup>2</sup>

Much less then should we be puzzled at certain departures as to sacrifices in 'high places,' etc. These were allowed by Samuel and other Prophets, and other changes of detail made by David and Solomon, who also were Prophets of God. None the less the 'Law,' as we have it in Moses, was the

<sup>1</sup> Note this well (2 Kings xxiii. 24). See also p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> This most important fact has been strangely neglected in its bearing upon all these questions, even by those who state it. It is a very bold and rash assumption of some that 'the book' found was only that part of Moses now commonly called the 'Deuteronomy.' This is against the *fact* that the division of Moses is a modern and artificial one. It is against the evident implication of the history (2 Kings xxiii. 21, etc.), that it is the complete minutiae of ceremony as found in 'Exodus,' which was followed by Josiah, rather than the brief notice of the Passover in 'Deuteronomy.' What was found is first expressly called 'the Book of the Law,' afterwards 'of the Covenant.' There is indeed no reason why we should leave the natural sense that it was the entire 'Law' as certainly recognised from Ezra to Our Lord, except such reason as there may be in a desire to propitiate the doubting 'criticism' of modern times.

perfect and acknowledged rule for Israel, and preserved as such by its lawful guardians, as much as the Holy Bible was kept by the Church through the Dark Ages.

This finding of the neglected book and restoration of its authority in Josiah's time, has been twisted by some into proof of the strange theory just noticed, as though it informed us of the bringing out a most ingenious forgery of some unknown priests, who, with a mixture of pious devotion to the true God, and contempt for His wrath against those who take His Name in vain or bear false witness, invented new precepts of worship and obedience to Him, and then prepared this book, in the name of a prophet who lived a thousand years before—sowed it thickly with such expressions as—‘And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,’ etc. (in this not hoping or thinking to affect their own or even the next succeeding generations), and then hid it where it could be found eighty or a hundred years afterwards, and be believed!

A modified theory of this is sometimes suggested, viz., that all the substance of what we call the ‘Books of Moses’ had survived by oral tradition in different classes of people: the Levitical law of sacrifices among that tribe whose interest it was to make the most of that, but who had never succeeded in making anybody else believe in it, and so with other parts of it. Somebody guesses now—thousands of years after these events—that some cunning old zealots, getting tired of a stern tradition which had for ages forbidden any one to write down God's law (whatever else was written), it being preserved by the mere oral tradition (though not observed at all), for some mysterious purpose, these very religious but very unscrupulous priests (and nobody knows at all *who* they were) committed it to writing with perfect accuracy, and then hid it in the Temple!

Professor Robertson Smith thinks they did this in Hezekiah's reign. Is there any record or suggestion of this in the history of that time? None whatever. Is there *any* proof of this story? None. Why should we then believe it? Because Professor Kuenen in Holland, and Professor Robertson Smith in Scotland, and some others, have decided that Moses did not write the Book of Moses; and as King Josiah did find ‘a



book,' they must account for the existence of the book in some way! Is that 'science'? Then let us prefer to keep to the common sense of truth without being scientific. The real history shows that a book was found there because the book had been written nearly a thousand years before: had been kept by an unbroken line of men whose charge it was—had been always recognised as the pure Law of Moses, but often abandoned for a while, if ever fully observed. And because this defection for some eighty years—that is, nearly as long as this century has now lasted—had been more entire than ever before, and the sacred memories and traditions had almost perished, the bringing out of this neglected book, not merely for priests to study, but for the whole people to learn and repent by, was indeed a great event.

If this is not so we can have no sort of (I will not say reverence, but even) respect for the 'Pentateuch.' What confidence can we have in the *History* related by men, in a fictitious narrative of how 'the Lord spake unto Moses,' and Moses to Israel, when it was what they themselves had made up eight or nine hundred years afterwards? What improbable accuracy of oral tradition of the most minute directions of ritual and law of what had not been written down before, and by very few, if any, observed for many ages?

The religion thus revived in Judea fell with Josiah, cut off in battle in the flower of his age. The mighty Egyptian and Assyrian nations were now under monarchs of great energy, renewing their rivalry of ages. Josiah rashly meddled in this by allying himself with the Assyrians, attacking Pharaoh on his way east with a great army. Then the Egyptian king not only levied a heavy contribution upon the little kingdom, which pressed hard upon all the people, but he showed his power also by displacing one son of Josiah, Jehoahaz or Shallum, who had begun to reign, and putting another, Jehoiakim, in his place. Both these were perverse idolaters and evil rulers. Yet the second one reigned for eleven years, and even died in his bed, and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin.

But before this the kings of Judah with all around them had yielded to the conquering power of the East, and been transferred as vassals from Pharaoh to the terrible

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Judea was now harried by invasions of all its unfriendly neighbours, including the Bedouins of Arabia. But just before his death, Jehoiakim had ventured to renounce the authority of the king of Babylon and defy him. It was not until his son's reign was begun that the great army sent to repress this rebellion surrounded Jerusalem. It fell.

Then began that period of this History called 'the Captivity of Babylon,' when the holy vessels of the Temple, as well as all other spoil that could be found, were carried off, and the chief of the people, to the number of 10,000, were marched some 800 miles across a rough country to the low plains of the Euphrates, where 'by the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept.' Nearly ten years after, this was repeated with even more severity. For the prince whom Nebuchadnezzar set up as a vassal king over the poor people whom he did not care to take into captivity, this Zedekiah was foolish enough to attempt rebellion. It ended in another capture and plunder of the city, and the removal of all the able-bodied men, making sure that they would never be mustered for another rebellion. They and their king were swept along with the great army on its return march to Babylon.

The sceptre seemed indeed to have departed from Judah; and yet it was to be 500 years more before the great Shiloh should come. It had departed, so far as any earthly kingdom of Israel should ever really exist any more. But, as we shall also see, the glory and the power of a greater KING than any other who ever then or since bore the name were yet to be introduced by these and even more tragical events.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OTHER RELIGIONS—B. C. 1000-500.

IN the central part of the inhabited world—say the southern half of the north temperate belt of the Eastern Continent—the human race prospered most in its tendencies to improvement, and was most checked in some of its downward impulses. Here, from the far Eastern or Pacific seas to where the Atlantic seemed to end the world of mankind, men by degrees gathered into nations instead of remaining scattered in tribes. Here they tilled the ground like their first ancestor, and built houses, instead of the more idle wandering life of herdsmen and their shifting tents. Here they began to reduce law and government to fixed and complex forms, to state in terms the rights and duties of men to one another, and to record the greater events, as they passed, in writing. Thus arts were greatly improved and inventions multiplied, not perhaps with the swiftness with which such things seem to move in some countries now, but vastly quicker than among the wandering tribes. Riches increased, and with that the difference between the few more, and the many less, fortunate. By this government tended to be more a matter of selfishness and injustice of the one man or the very few who had power. All had a traditionary belief, responded to by our nature, that there must be law, and rulers to enforce it; and so that obedience and loyalty were necessary. But as this was wounded by the sense of unjust rule, rebellion, or the fear of it, made the ruler yet more cruel. He was like to use fear as his chief or only motive to secure obedience. Often the hated authority was right in what was resisted. It was then the anger of a deserved humilia-

tion, the defeat of some selfish wrong, which made the offender a rebel and a conspirator. But, on the other hand, this was often the insurrection of a wounded sense of justice. It is a terrible, and yet has often been an actual thing, that the very one who represented the justice of God to others was himself the worst of evil-doers. Here was another grievous perversion of that true Religion by which all law arises from and depends upon the knowledge and love of God.

There was yet another instance of this, in that the struggles of selfish passion between individual men passed into deadly contests between rival families, tribes, and at last great nations. This indeed often (though not always) began with the mere rapacity or revenge of a king, or of some one who prompted him. But wars, however begun, usually became in the end the ambition and the anger of thousands. They increased the miseries of want, suffering, and death in all the communities of men. Yet religion mingled with wars, as it must with all great matters, and as it always will in some way. This was another factor in the terrible perversion and confusion of Religion and morals.

Early in this period appeared, in a lovely country on the north of the Mediterranean Sea, certain poetical writings of great beauty. Though these books are, after those of Moses, among the very oldest human writings, they have never since been surpassed in their kind of poetry. They are the study and admiration of all the most refined nations of our day. But what concerns us most now (and it is no small part of their poetical value) is that they give us the most artless and exact view of the religion of one of the 'Gentile' races. That the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are not books of religious rites and opinions, prepared in order to set down what the sovereign or priestly order meant the religion of the people to be, makes them all the more valuable for our purpose. Such formal religious writings, unless they are the direct Word of God to men, or follow that carefully, are sure to be somewhat factitious and fictitious; to omit much of fact interesting to us, and spend most of their words upon the artificial fancies and conceits of their writers, and their ambitious but feeble speculations. They represent much

more what these 'doctrinaires' would like to make the theory of their people's religion, than what that religion really is.

The great poems of Homer tell us so naturally what the old Greeks and Levantines did and thought about Divine things, that we can take them in the main in this regard for fact, and study what they furnish for a history of the religion of mankind. They show certain very distinct remains of the primitive Religion. First, that Religion lay at the root of all authority, public order, and personal righteousness. Second, that it was given to men by the power above men, which was thus worshipped—was not discovered or invented by mankind. Third, that language, and letters, and the chief arts necessary to social man, were also such Divine gifts. Fourth, that, as tradition went back furthest, it found mankind, not more and more brutish, but more beautiful, innocent, and happy ; perfectly so at the very beginning. Fifth, that this beginning was by the will and act of that Divine Power. Sixth, that in the later ages of man's degeneracy and many crimes, it was necessary for all to propitiate that Power by various acts of worship, needing an Order of priesthood, but especially by the killing of useful beasts in sacrifice.

No ingenuity can give a reasonable account of how these things could appear in the writings of Homer, upon the theory that religion is man's invention, by slow degrees of constant advance, from the most crude and cruel ideas of the super-human. How came such elevated thoughts of it to be universal among Greeks and others while they were a barbarous people, and to fade away, and be almost unknown among the elegant Athenians of 500 years later ?

On the other hand, the Religion of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had already departed far from the true and old, in changing the thought of God into a belief in many 'gods.' All idea of personal love, as due on our part, to this great unseen Power, or of a great, patient, and gracious love towards us on its part, had also disappeared. The guilty fear of those who owed ever so much to this mighty creditor, and had nothing to pay, alone remained. The precious tradition of Divine pity for sinners, and of a great mystery of future salvation of them by the righteous God Himself, was, if not

totally lost, only very faintly discoverable in their sacrifices for sins.

The process of this change, and evidently a very natural one, seems to have been, that those who had wandered so far from the country of Adam and Noah, as to have got out of the stronger currents of true tradition there, had already in some twelve centuries—say at least thirty generations—gone further than the Persians, or even the Egyptians, in some directions of false religion. They did not lose all religion. For when their love and hope ceased to rise that way, their fears reminded them that there was somebody far above men, and master of them. Following evil desire, and not restrained in it by penitent love of God, nor hope in Him, they were kept back from utter and shameless evil by the old tradition of right- and wrong-doing, which human authority must enforce to some extent, to maintain any order and peace among men. But the very 'gods' had ceased really to represent this—or to differ from men except in being more powerful, and usually unseen. And, as rulers and other admired men used their power to gratify pride and every sensual passion, so the 'gods' were represented by priests and poets, as doing the like. Their authority and example were used to justify this selfish passion and to gratify its imaginations. Thus Law and Religion, while still leagued together, were widely sundered in principle. So that what would make a man odious to others, and the subject of just vengeance, was admired in the higher persons, who were yet believed to be the authors and maintainers of that law!

Then guilty fear sometimes grew more and more sanguinary and cruel in sacrifices. The thought that, as it was men's sins that were to be atoned for, men should be the victims, very naturally came forward. With these Greeks this was checked and softened by other influences. In the more barbarous races, further removed from the fountain of Religion and from commerce with others, and where the struggle for life itself against fierce beasts, and also the rigours of winter, or poisonous torrid heats, tended to make men more hard and cruel, this error in religion grew to a terrible ferocity, which darkened the life of all the people, and seemed as if its only limit would be reached when the priests had no other

man or woman left to immolate. We see this somewhat in the North-American and Siberian, but still more in those of South and West Africa.

In all this the early Greeks, as described by Homer, represent in the main the process of deterioration and change of religion going on everywhere, except among those to whom God had now given His Word, both spoken and written, and whom He had chosen to be His true worshippers for the 1000 years to follow. (Even among them these evil influences had a certain play and power, which only shows the more the strength of the tendency, and the Divine force which resisted it.)

But another element in this change now begins to come more plainly into view. In the more civilised lands, beside those who were busy with war, or the arts of peace, there were some who turned rather to speculations upon things spiritual, upon man's nature and destiny, and upon the unseen Divine. Probably not distinguishing among their own thoughts between what they had learned and what they now reasoned out, they often took for their own discovery what of the primitive Religion (including God's commandments of duty) had come down to them and all the rest of men. With this, they also mingled more or less of the later and false tradition. But, besides this, some of these more powerful and original minds proceeded to further 'philosophy' of their own. Inasmuch as these things are above our invention—while every man is beset by misleading tendencies of self-confidence, ambition, and evil desire,—this 'philosophy' was sure to be erroneous in some, and perhaps in all points. At least, what was best in it would only be the imperfect and deformed traces of the original Word of God to man.

It is no doubt impossible to say when this began among men. Its real beginnings were probably far back in the early and patriarchal world. But the first distinct memorials of it were, it seems, not in Greece nor even Egypt, but in India. Here was also a very early and remarkable civilisation. There seem to be quite plain footprints (in the language) of this people, as having come direct from the Persian region, the very countries where the first men lived, and the ancient truth about God and man's soul lingered longest by mere tradition.

So we find in the earliest Indian writings the thought of Him as One, the Creator of all things, and having given laws of righteous living to mankind, His noblest creatures. But besides this, we have not only some of the false religion of the later Persians, but men arose early among the Hindus who had speculative and imaginative minds, and employed them upon questions of religion.

The discovery of these writings (the Vedas, etc.), in modern times, and especially a more correct knowledge of them in our own generation, has attracted great attention among European scholars. The best judgment fixes the composition of the Vedas at about the time of King David and the siege of Troy.<sup>1</sup> Some maintain, but without any good reason, that they are vastly older than I have stated, even much older than the writings of Moses.<sup>2</sup> Any such claims by the Brahmins in behalf of the antiquity of the Vedas prove nothing, unless they also turn all the absurd fictions, in the midst of which the few finer passages are scattered, into facts. There is no sort of resemblance between this judgment and a rejection of our old Holy Scriptures. For the Vedas have no mighty testimony of miracles and sober tradition, of continuous yearly and even weekly celebrations from the very days of Moses, and of the verification of them by the Divine Lord and Saviour of men when He was in the world as our fellow-man. I name these reasons for our obedient faith rather than that other great one, that the Holy Bible is in itself and throughout so incomparably great and true, because some may assume that this is mere religious prejudice. And yet who of us can, upon any fair comparison, think of the Vedas, or of the Buddhist or Confucian writings, as having any such Divine genuineness as the Christian Scriptures?

The chief interest of the Vedas to us is, that some modern scholars think that in them they find proof that mankind discovered the idea of religion in some very remote age by

<sup>1</sup> Professor Max Müller assents to this, *India*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Professor M. seems, in absurd contradiction of his own previous acknowledgment of the fact, to say this in substance. It is probably an inadvertence from his lack of acquaintance with the Hebrew history. But who in this day can know everything?



the reasonings of these Hindu philosophers, or others before them. I am not able to find any proof or suggestion of that notion in those writings. We have already seen that all facts of History so far, and the Divine Word, inform us that God gave man true Religion from the first. And with this all the better parts of the Indian writings agree. The rest is just such false invention as we find among Egyptians, Syrians, and Greeks. The variations of these various peoples are evidently due to their different circumstances and history, and to the strong individual genius of certain poets, priests, and kings, among each of them.

It was such a characteristic with the Hindus that their religion should take (that is, in the opinions of a few speculative persons and the priestly caste appropriating this) the form of an abstract philosophy, ingenious, extremely so in some things, but metaphysical, both in the popular and technical sense, fanciful and fruitless as regards men's real lives, their goodness and happiness. This metaphysical religion was utterly unmeaning to almost all the Hindu people. They were, and ever have been, are now, as blind and silly idolaters (with morals as bad as those of their many gods) as the Egyptians were. Now Religion is for labourers as much as for philosophers, for women and children as much as for priests. But the very Brahmins themselves practised the degrading, formal, and superstitious religion, as much as the lowest of the people. At this day these guardians and students of the Vedas are, as a class, beside being extremely sensual and immoral, the most bigoted and active champions of all those superstitions—in this way living upon the false religion of the ignorant. That alone would suggest that we are not to look in these Vedic writings for the beginnings or progress of pure Religion.

Some one may reply that the same argument will disprove the Christian Scriptures. If he, or those who follow his opinions, really think that there is a resemblance in this between the Church of Jesus Christ with its influence upon Christendom, and the actual religion of India, I can only then express my astonishment at such an opinion, and my readiness to examine this elsewhere as a question of fact. I suppose this now as unnecessary with most of my readers as

for a writer upon government to prove that this country has better law than the Bulgarians had under Turkish rule a few years ago. Another proof is that among these Indian writings, by the distinct allowance, or rather the earnest contention, of their admirers, the more ancient are the truer and better. As we come down from those, the Vedas and Shastras, etc., become more trivial and superstitious. In the Holy Bible there is a noble consistency and unity of original truth. If we trace in it also a movement with History, that is one of growing light and expanding love. At the last, after 1500 years, we have the Gospel, which is the 'perfect day,' to crown the early dawn of the older Scriptures.

Examined in detail, we find even the oldest and best of the Sanscrit writings, say the Rig-Veda, of which we have a translation by the greatest student and advocate of them among English-speaking people, as a whole, exceedingly unmeaning, dull, and repetitious.

It is indeed well for one like the present writer, who (and almost all of us) cannot spend years in acquiring these strange languages, and toiling through all their literature, to be careful in forming such a judgment as this. But we must have and express some judgments in these matters; otherwise we are the mere slaves, and perhaps dupes, of the few who have, or claim to have, gone through all this investigation. So if, as in the present instance, the judgment is given by one who has employed such means for a fair judgment as anything short of a lifetime given only to them (and then making a man quite incapable of the comparison with other writings, and likely to be biassed by his special ambition) will allow, and who uses the very renderings and selections from these writings furnished by their admirers, such an opinion should have its chance. Certainly it seems likely to be a fairer and more intelligent one than that of those who call upon us to believe every strange notion which they claim as new-discovered truth, and in the same breath say that no one has a right to an opinion about it but themselves; *because* their studies have been so narrow, and their pride is so engrossed with them.

With the admiration of the Vedas we have associated, by its promoters, the theory of demonstrating the beginnings and growth of religious thought, solely by investigating the mere

words of the Sanscrit or ancient Indian language. I have endeavoured to follow this process as they give it, with a desire to find any truth that may be so discovered. And, as the result, I do not hesitate to say that the method is entirely fanciful, and, upon the whole, irrational. It is a reversal of the natural method of an *investigation* (i.e. following the footsteps) of facts. If anything can be (or at least has been) thus traced in regard to the origin and progress of men's thoughts about religion, it is only of the false and morbid perversions of original truth, and tracing this does not lead us in the direction of the original.

So this so-called scientific research has been really applied to set aside real history. We have seen how the entire record of what God has done with men from the beginning, and which gathers into its majestic current all the rills of genuine tradition and the streams of the actual experience of later generations, tells us truly how men begun to be religious, and how there came to be so many and various false religions. But the class of Sanscrit scholars in question, starting from the false theory (as if it were certain fact) that men have made every thought for themselves, and then made words to suit their thoughts, and leaping from one fanciful guess to another about such words, have found an affinity between the Latin *Jupiter* and the Sanscrit *Dyaus-piter*, and proposed the Greek *Zeus-pater* as a link and interpreter of the two. Well, allowing all that, what then? Fairly that, earlier than the idolatries and mythologies, either Latin, Greek, or Indian, there was some juster idea of God as the One and Only, the Maker and Lover of all mankind, 'the Father.' That we have seen to be true enough. The wonder *would* be (and is in some few cases, no doubt) if all trace of this original truth had faded out of the *names* which were worshipped.

But that is not what the 'Comparative Religion' sees in it. It is certain that these 'Aryan' men were, for their own race, if not for all mankind, the discoverers of all Religion, as much as James Watt was of the steam-engine. And so they assert that all the ancient Divine Names are those of the air or sky; and that this proves that the notion of an Unseen Person (or persons), and so of all Religion, began, by slow development, from fancies about the sky and

air. They follow the same process in 'proving' that many other such names and personifications of worship are of various powers or parts of 'Nature.' Therefore, all men's religion began with their fears or admiration of the sky, winds, waters, fire, sun, moon, stars, and other great objects. More spiritual religion, and the idea of only One God, was then but a slow refinement upon this, which employed a thousand generations and as many philosophers and poets.

We *know* the truth about this, if we are real, modest learners, and not merely would-be discoverers. But beside the attenuated conjecture out of which all this theory is built, which would make it of little value, even if we were not already in possession of that truth, and were left to the best guesses we could make, there are suggestions of error in the theory itself. That some names of worship, of the chief object of it, should have a figurative reference to the sky above, is natural enough. That great phrase 'given to us from above,' and that most sacred invocation, '*Our Father Which art in Heaven,*' respond to the lifting of the eyes, which is the first gesture of Religion. All our knowledge of this earth, and of the stars as being rolling spheres in vast space, makes no discord with the thought of God being *above* us in space, though present everywhere. Why this is, and how it accords with spiritual truth about Him, is plainly not to be known in this life, but is among the glorious wonders of our future. We suppose of course that Adam looked up into the same vast sky, when he adored God with innocent love.

With this accords our wonder at the vastness of space,<sup>1</sup> and all our thought of what is 'above the world,' of a 'High and Holy One Who inhabiteth eternity.' So that the first and chief Divine Name did not come to man from a false religion of worshipping the sky and air, but from true Religion adoring 'God Which is above.'

And this theory seems conscious of weakness in avoiding the very oldest word of worship, or affecting to make light of it. Everything in trustworthy history points to the holy

<sup>1</sup> If our great and much-misunderstood Berkeley were more read now-a-days, we should have less of the false thought about 'space' and 'time' which Philosophy nourishes.

name of 'El' or Elohim, and its various forms (as also that of *Jah*, Jehovah), as being so used before any others among men. That baffles the most ingenious effort to fasten upon it any derivation from creature-worship. Some foolish attempts that way have been made, but none of our sharp-witted students of words will espouse them. So far as we can penetrate its thought in that direction, the word seems to mean primarily 'the Mighty One.' It is a pure and true word in that way. Is it not quite as likely that men got the ordinary words for strength from this original (as we sometimes call what is very great 'godlike'), as that they named *Him* so because He is mighty? (See p. 180, *supra*.)

We may try this theory of the 'Aryan' origin of all religion by another comparison. Those whose religion was of the 'Dyaus-pater,' have a 'philosophy' with it much quoted by their admirers as being about as wise and true as the Gospel of Our Lord. Some of its phrases have a resemblance to some of His teachings. Others are striking, as the sayings of men whom in fact Christians have until lately wrongly supposed to be mere barbarians. We might as well think this of the Athenians in Pericles' days. But, on the other hand, suppose we take the very best of their writings, the Rig-Veda as a whole, and place it by the New Testament. No such severe test, however, will we apply. We will take a book which has not a trace even of the Hebrew civilisation, or an illustration drawn from so cultivated a society as that, or from the arts of Egypt. It shall be older, and simpler, and closer, by all the marks of thought contained within it, to the 'infant world' than any of the others. There is not in the Book of Job any allusion to towns or large states, to houses (all dwellings are tents, as *e.g.* viii. 22, 'dwelling-place,' *ochel*), not even to Moses or his laws, to the people of Israel, to Egypt or Babylon, to the luxuries of those people, or the power of their monarchs.

This book, then, should be the nearest to this 'elementary religion' of sky, wind, sun, or star worship. Is it so? The exact reverse of this is true. The Book of Job has not a trace of such a lower and grosser stage of Religion. It expressly rejects and reproves such things. It is vastly more high, refined, and spiritual in its thoughts than the Rig-Veda.

Walking in the daylight of History, as we have so far, we now meet a man blindfolded, who accosts us with the assurance that it is pitch-dark everywhere but with him; but that if we will come into his gloomy alley he will be able, by peering under his bandages, and following certain clues which he has felt out, and allowing him some very bold guesses and daring inferences, he will be able to conduct us to some inestimable 'science' about the beginnings of Religion. It would certainly not be the pursuit of truth that would lead 'us, whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,'<sup>1</sup> to walk away from that wisdom under such guidance.

As to the period now before us (say 1500 B.C., from David to the Exile of Babylon; from the Vedas, Zend, and Iliad, to Confucius, Buddha, and Socrates), it is easy to have either one of two opposite opinions, neither of which is true. The one is, that God took no note of the religion of the rest of mankind, and only concerned Himself with that of Israel. The other is, that He inspired men among these 'Gentiles' to be poets, philosophers, and teachers of religion, as much as He did His holy Prophets in Israel, and that their sayings and writings were His Word to those nations. Much the same as this last is the theory that He speaks to all men in 'Nature' as much as by any words.

Either of these notions is contrary to express words of Holy Scripture, and also to the very idea of any 'Word of God.' There would be, then, no meaning in those sayings about having chosen the descendants of Abraham and Israel as His 'peculiar people,' if He talked to other nations as much. There can be no occasion of talking to men in words, if He speaks to them as much, and as plainly; in His 'works.'

It is very rash and misleading for us to argue positively as to what God must or must not do, from our nature or notions. Yet some such thought, cautiously and reverently followed, may help us to understand what He does *say* to us.

<sup>1</sup> It is very impressive to the present writer that he finds these words of poetry, of an Oxford man of another generation who knew something of India, and who gave his whole bright soul and very life to it, the best expression of what he would say here in most sober prose.

One principle of such caution and reverence would be that *He* made our nature, minds, and speech itself, and He 'to Whom all things do bow and obey,' working His Will, must speak to us with the greatest clearness and truth when He chooses to use *words*. Another is that what we infer to be His teaching of us in other ways is subject to much more danger of mistake, as all our weakness of thought and bias by selfishness and prejudice has more play in this. Much more likely are we then to set up our own fancies, wishes, and mistakes, as what God tells us.

It is also a part of this common sense to allow that, God having made such a numerous order of creatures with a spiritual and moral nature—that very part of the living tenants of this great world who can know and love Him, and be in this and like ways exceedingly happy and good, proceeding through a few score of years of such life to a higher everlasting life—that they being at any time, no matter how this came about, all utterly out of the way of such a good life here,—He would make use of messages and instructions in words direct from Himself, as at least one means of replacing them in the right way. Compared with the other idea, which leaves us wholly to the discoveries of the few discovering men there may be, and to immeasurable ages of wickedness, which must thus endure among mankind before that slow process could reach any considerable number of them, the former supposition agrees far better with our best ideas of God.<sup>1</sup>

It may be well for the few men who have the time and the turn for it to use the same restless ingenuity which sets others to adding to the common stock of knowledge in the useful arts, sciences, and writings,—to employ this upon thoughts of religion. In that case all useful truth brought out is indeed from God as well as all that the others have contrived, from the Chaldee astronomers to Newton and Herschel ; or, with mechanical inventions, from the first plough to the telephone. But what thoughtful Christian would set any of these by the side of the giving of the Ten Command-

<sup>1</sup> Those who like such a 'development' of religion, for which 40,000 years would be a very small allowance, can find no objection to the old faith in the Divine mystery by which the Gospel came only after 4000 years.

ments, or the sending of the Twelve Apostles into all the world?

Just so, any man's religious reasonings or inventions are the 'revelation' of God to us, in a sense far inferior to that of His actual Word. And they ought not only to be regarded as very humble aids in this association, but we might in reason fear that they would often in fact mislead from that truth. And so God's very Word warns us that they probably will, unless they proceed from *it*, and seek only to make it the better known. If it seems to any one an objection to this that the Word of God came for fifteen centuries to only one very small nation out of all mankind, it is no less true that even this, with its expansion from then on, for now near 2000 years, was vastly better than no Word of God at all, which is the other alternative.

It may be too (though this is rather claimed and allowed, than proved), that during the long interval of Pagan darkness, for almost all mankind, God sent some rays of His truth to certain nations, especially through the philosophers and religious reformers among the Hindus, Chinese, and Greeks, of whom so much is claimed in this way. Yet even this was only a small part of His actual grace to all those people, in keeping something of the primitive religion alive among them in their traditions, laws, and very deformed worship and belief itself. Even the more acute and profound minds in question did not invent the spiritual ideas in which they differed from most of their countrymen, as Pythagoras proposed his beautiful geometrical problems, or some Chinaman arranged a 'mariner's compass.' No; they only recalled better than others, and stated in words, some of that part of God's Word to men which had been lost out of sight by their people. They followed back some of the traces still lingering in the thoughts of all, and, as St. Paul says, perpetually witnessed to before all eyes in the things which God has made. They were likely to suppose that these were only their own cognitions. Sometimes they knew and acknowledged that they received these suggestions from the thinking men of other and distant nations.

There were no such means of travel, and no such occasion



for it, as exists in our age. Wars and national animosities, suspicious and cruel governments, and the long time and great expense of travel, caused this. Yet the love of gain, and the curiosity of the more adventurous spirits, carried a few men on long journeys. Sometimes these were also men curious to know something of the religious thoughts of other people, and to compare them with what they were used to. It would have been rather strange if some of the more remarkable beliefs of the Israelites had not thus come to the knowledge of philosophic 'Gentiles,' and been studied and more or less accepted by them. Perhaps what they thus received they somewhat confounded with or mistook for their own speculations. Probably in no such case were the Hebrew beliefs quite understood, and were more or less transformed by the learner, especially when at second or third hand they reached some strong thinker, as, for instance—to take an illustration from the events of five or six hundred years later yet,—if Plato the Greek came upon such strange doctrines among Persians or Indians, who had first heard of them from travellers among the people of Palestine, or reports of what Hebrew traders let fall of the religion of their people.

Yet in this we do not entirely anticipate. Under David and his son Solomon the Hebrew people sprang up into a wide power and great influence among the nations of the East. Instead of fighting for existence with the other dwellers in Canaan, with the envioning Arabians and Syrians, they made vassals of all these, and treated as equals with the great Egyptian and Assyrian monarchs whose neighbours they had thus become. Much commerce both by sea and land began with this, and without doubt the interchange of thoughts and opinions as well as of wares. If such intellectual barter would have been neglected otherwise, that was quite impossible when those two great Hebrew kings were themselves among the greatest writers who have ever set others to thinking. Of the fact indeed we have a positive record in the remarkable 'passage of the Book of Kings (1 Kings iv. 29-34) about the 'wisdom of Solomon,' and the story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba (see 1 Kings x., also 2 Chron. ix.), and all the traditions of the East, even to

our day. Specially *how* those most great and true thoughts about the true God were noticed by the wise men of the East, or of other regions, observed to accord with the traces of wisest tradition among themselves, pondered and represented to their own people—all this we do not know—for one reason, because we have as yet no trustworthy history except these very sacred books of Israel. Did it at all check the downward movement everywhere to multiply false gods and to increase immoral superstitions? God has not been pleased to tell us, nor can any of our guesses at this, from 'comparative language' or abstract reasonings, even when pursued with the wisest and most modest caution, give any considerable light. We only know, and this we do know, that the love of God was bringing to all the souls which He had made a great redemption, and that one part of the process was to keep the people of Israel from the false and filthy religions that had come in like a flood over all the rest of the world.

It was in this period that important movements took place in some of the regions of false religion. None of our chronologies of the event are very certain. Some men seem very certain of them, but that does not help the matter. Yet we may fairly judge that between 750 and 400 B.C. in the great age of the Hebrew Prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, arose Buddha in India, Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Persia, Numa at Rome, Lycurgus in Sparta, and the older Greek philosophers. It is quite a fashion of some noted writers of our day, perhaps I must confess quite *the* fashion of literary divines, to declare that these all were God's Prophets, much as Isaiah or Daniel. Some in this complacency would like to let in to 'the goodly fellowship' also the famous Arabian of a much later time, whom Islam in effect declares to be the only prophet. The step to this is indeed short from declaring every man who ever did, said, or wrote what we greatly admire, to have been 'inspired.' And with this we usually find much contempt for 'mechanical inspiration,' in which those who so think include, not only the notion of men's merely writing at the dictation of God, without its being at all their thoughts (which certainly this book does not maintain), but any Divine influence which

will keep the inspired writing free from errors of fact or thought.

By this indeed the way is well cleared for allowing every one of those remarkable men to have been 'inspired'—in fact, for every one whom we admire in History,—and why not the pleasing hope to the modern writer who is so wise and liberal, that he too is an instance of inspiration?

But what is there left of the term then as a sacred distinction for some whom God chose through the ages to be the authors of His incomparable Word, of Holy Scriptures, which, so far from being instances of what excites the pride of man, humble him in proclaiming always that 'there is none good (and none great) but God.' Let men thus trifle, if they will, with the word 'inspiration,' but leave untouched in this what the Book itself describes as when 'holy men of old spake (and wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

We may well believe, we ought to, that whatever is true or beautiful in a sentence of Confucius or of Plato is God's gift to all who read it. So is speech itself, and writing, the art of printing, and every saying or contrivance of a man that does others good. HE is the cause and the life of all; and all these His works are known unto Him from the beginning.

But it is His own Will and way that there should be a vast difference between all things working His Will, and thus our duty of gratitude to Him for every good, no matter by what means it reaches us, by our fellow-men's acts or otherwise, and certain other acts and sayings which are directly and specially His. This is essential to any thought of a real 'Word of God' to us. Only with this agrees the whole history of the Patriarchs and of Israel, conducting in the One, Only, and Divine Saviour of the world. If any one still doubts this, let him notice how all that Holy Book, and God the Word Himself in person on earth, recognises no Prophets of His except these,<sup>1</sup> allows to none but Israel any

<sup>1</sup> The only exception to this is *Balaam*, and that was at least 500 years before any of the philosophers, among the lingerings of pure religion outside of Israel, and before that people were yet settled in a land of their own to be exclusively the 'Holy Nation.'

'oracles (that is, personal communications) of God,' and calls all the rest of the world 'the people that sit in darkness.' He does in glorious mercy allow that there may have been among them some who 'feared God and worked righteousness,' but these seemed rather the obscure who have no place in History, they 'according to *their deeds*,' and not at all as teachers of others.

In making the only true and sacred use of the power of teaching other men, whether by books, journals, or speech of any kind (and the present writer has endeavoured with care and humility to keep this in mind), but especially in writing History, we are in constant danger of a most misleading illusion, of assuming that it is such as we who are alone of any account among mankind. Thus, if men can show, or fancy they do, that the intellectual people, say the writers and readers of any age or country, had such or such religious ideas, they suppose that they have described its religion. Whereas, with all allowance for the greater personal influence of such men over a few others, this may not touch the hundredth part of the facts. If a thousand such more favoured people are rightly described, to a million the description may have no just application. Then *truth*, 'things as they are,' or, more correctly yet, as God sees them, is utterly misrepresented as to the thoughts and the welfare of a people, each soul of the larger number being of as much importance to itself, and in the eyes of Him for Whom all alike exist, as any one of the former. This the true Religion has always distinctly recognised.

As all things are made by Him and do His Will, and men among them, we only follow the simplest and literal truth in accounting whatever truth or truth-seeking things any men have brought forth, as instances of God's deep ways of grace to all mankind, while the main course of this mercy is in the current of His direct Word. Indeed, such things are and will be good only as they accord with that, and tend to bring the whole world into the Kingdom of that Son of David Who re-ascended to Heaven in the midst of human History.

When in tracing such events we have to leave the plain road of Divine truth, we need every precaution to separate

facts from the mistakes, the vainglorious fictions and other illusions, of mere human history. And we have also to keep in mind that our purpose should be, not to find new heroes in neglected regions of history,—to set them up as rivals of the cherished idols of other men,—but to find the simple truth as to what God may have caused them to say and do among their fellow-men of false religion; to check its follies and impieties, or even to turn their countrymen back, if for a little, toward the pure knowledge with which all mankind began.

In all instances of what appear to be the institution, or any great change, of the religion of a people, other than the work of God for the true and Divine Religion, when in times long after we try to estimate the work of any individual, we must beware of ascribing to any one such man what may be the result of thousands of influences drifting slowly together toward a certain joint effect. It is as true in these instances as any others, and perhaps they are the strongest instances of this, that what we call the doings of great men, proceed from forces far greater than they or any of their conspicuous contemporaries. These all are rather the instruments with which such a force, gathering the feelings and wishes of the many, and even these executing unconsciously the Will of Another, makes 'great men' of a few of the stronger of its number, by their being the more conspicuous agents of millions. The tendency of success of this kind is to raise up eulogists and flatterers (even sincere worshippers), of the powerful and famous, who make even far more yet than is reasonable, of the importance to these events of those they admire.

We have already seen that in the past history, the 'many inventions' with which all the tribes of men in various ways deformed, mutilated, or disguised the original truth, seem to have developed slowly, and by unnoticed degrees, instead of being the contrivances of a few. So we may be sure it was with every later 'movement' of the kind. Quite probably, too, in the earlier instances, it was a man of more than ordinary force here and there, though long since forgotten, who gave the peculiar turn to the false religion of his own people, so that we seem to have so many different false

religions. There were also great differences as to what in this way was added to the primitive truth, or what parts of that truth were perverted, or neglected, or even entirely excluded.

Thus among the primitive North Europeans (see Faber, *Origin of Pagan Idolatry*) the idea of sin and sacrifice survived in a marked way in gloomy and bloody rites; while that God was One and a Spirit was much lost to them in the religion of many and unworthy deities. On the other hand, the most ancient Chinese religion still contained the thought of One Spirit, the Absolute Creator of all else. Yet it got rid of the painful thought of guilt, or even of any duty, toward Him. It had no sacrifice of propitiation, and no act of real worship (the high annual ceremonies are no such worship) of Him. In place of that, there is a strange adoration of parents and remoter ancestors. Allowing of no 'duty' except of men toward one another, they set that of children in the highest place, and adjusted all morals, and what they had of practical religion, to that.

The Hindu tendency, so far as the speculations of a few men went (and what effect we can reasonably allow to this upon the religion of the other 999 thousands of their people), was toward a dreamy metaphysics about space and time, infinity and eternity, and the like. All this had a great fascination for men of a certain turn of mind, and who had leisure from actual work for it. It always has had, and has now. But it does not lead to truth in matters of Religion, with which always in fact it insists and persists in employing itself. Thus, as we have seen in regard to the so-called holy writings of India, the more intellectual wandered from the obedient love of God, and belief of His Word (primitive), as to the Creation, the Fall of Man, and his hope of salvation and a better Eternal life, into fancies of an eternal and incessant reproduction of worlds, in vast cycles of time, and a ceaseless transmigration of the lives of men—of vague confusion of God Himself with the 'forces of Nature' and the like. With this there was an actual religion of temples, ceremonies, offerings, and idols of the most absurd, disgusting, and even indecent kind. This was probably all of the religion of the ignorant, and a great part of that of the

learned. Yet by the goodness of God were still left them some true thoughts of worship, many wise laws of the past, and true rules of good conduct among men.

But about this time appeared in India one of those famous reformers of religion before alluded to. The attempts of this man's followers afterwards to exalt him have produced such a mass of extravagant fictions that we are scarcely able to determine even that there was one such person as Buddha, of whom a fair and trustworthy account can be given. If we are resolved that such a great and good man, who *may* have lived, shall not suffer in that way from the folly of his admirers, and so attempt to separate the probable in these stories from the absurd, we have still great difficulties before us.

Who is sure of his own sagacity and of his candour? And shall we read everything of the sort, so as to make sure that we overlook no fact? A lifetime of such reading would hardly suffice for an accomplished Indian scholar. And in what a state of mind would such an exclusive reading leave any man? Or shall we choose daintily in advance what we will credit enough for the purpose? Then we almost decide our question before we begin the inquiry. It is indeed a method quite to the hand of the new sect of British Buddhists, who with Mr. E. Arnold in his gorgeous poem, range all History, sacred and profane, to extract the honey of praise for their hero. And they confound the simple people who do not pretend to have read these thousand Puranas, etc., by asking them what right they have to an opinion, and bidding them simply believe what these new pundits tell them.

It seems rather that the first proper step of this inquiry would be to observe what actual religion the followers of Buddha have now. That is a *fact* within reasonable means of knowledge. If, as some say, we ought to have great respect for him because he was the author of the religion observed by more people now than any other,<sup>1</sup> let us look at that religion as it actually is before the eyes of all the world. As such, for almost all its devotees, it is one of the most unspiritual, immoral, and absurd of all the false reli-

<sup>1</sup> Hindus, Ceylonese, Burmans, Siamese, Chinese, and Japanese.

gions. And this is much more to the purpose than the fine talk of the very small number who say that they are the only real Buddhists. By this we must adjudge its founder in the main an inventor of evil and not of good for his fellow-men.

This is a true test, as to the History of Religion, of what any given man has done and deserves. Apply Our Lord's rule as to 'false prophets,—'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Yet for all that he may have had a noble purpose, and been much nearer the truth than most of his generation.<sup>1</sup> He is said by some to have been a great prince who gave up that power in order to do men the greater service of teaching religion. Others relate that he was a Brahmin of great note and authority, that several different names, as Gautama, Sakyamuni, etc., besides Buddha, are ascribed to him. It throws some doubt over the literal history. But we may fairly allow that there was such a man, who attempted to rid his countrymen of much of the gross idolatry and other superstitions taught and practised in what we may call the Sanscrit religion. Inasmuch as this did not do much to make them good and happy, which he claimed that religion should do, he set himself to make great changes in it. Others may have attempted this before,—succeeded in some measure, perhaps,—or prepared for his success. He seems to have lived a simple and self-denying life, and to have been very earnest and persevering in showing the folly of many of the superstitions of their ceremonial religion, and promoting better thoughts of justice, truth, and kindness among them, and was in all this strenuously opposed by the Brahmins as a class.

Nevertheless he seems to have gained a large success during his lifetime, and to have left behind him a great number of admirers and zealous disciples. So in the course of three centuries his doctrine triumphed in all India, even invaded and conquered Ceylon, Burmah, Siam, Japan, and

<sup>1</sup> Whoever supposes that Christians are afraid of this test for their religion may try it as rigorously as he will. There are a great many bad people, and a very great many imperfect, and more or less unhappy, people in the Christian lands. And the better Christian one is, the more ready will he be to allow this imperfection as to himself. But by the same rule of fruits as to the general effect upon the people, and especially upon the more religious of them, are we ready for a comparison of the religions of Buddha and of Our Lord?



China. By this time 'Buddhism' itself was a great deal changed. It had its many vast and splendid temples ; and in them, as the chief object of worship, were huge idols, images of Buddha himself. He had become to his followers the Supreme, if not the One Only God. And we have no reason to doubt that Buddhists in the main were then what they are now,—among the most superstitious and immoral of Pagans.

There had also begun to be philosophers among the Greeks. That people did not lack for very acute and original minds. Yet it seems plain that some of their philosophical speculations were at least suggested by those of the Hindus, coming to them through travellers and traders, as we know they did largely in the period next after. We have seen before (p. 14) that the earlier traditional learning of the Egyptians furnished them some such material, and that probably even the Hebrew doctrines were not quite unknown in Greece. But Egypt was now becoming the dead land (as destitute of human energy as it was once teeming with it), which it has been now for ages. The Greeks, on the contrary, were the coming people. Everything they touched—war, commerce, the arts, and philosophy was stirred with new energy. So the Greek philosophers had now begun a long line of such speculators, who have never been surpassed in that way.

Yet Philosophy may perhaps be best defined as the struggle of human intelligence to comprehend what is above its force. This might be altogether harmless,—in a sense useful,—as the practice of an intellectual gymnasium, to make the mental powers more firm and quick for real uses, if it were always kept from attempts to discover or improve such truth, as, in the nature of the case, we must always simply learn from God by faith. But that it never yet has consented to do ; and all experience seems to prove, never will. Certainly common sense requires us, in the interest of the highest truth, to refrain from, and to discourage in others such a useless and, even more, most mischievous employment of our minds. This, now, for Christians who do receive the highest truth from God,—to consider.

The Philosophy of the Greeks was in a very different

position from this, for which we may well excuse (but not by any means imitate) them. They were of 'the nations' who were left merely, as St. Paul afterwards told them in Athens, when he came to bring them the complete and glorious 'Word of God,' to 'seek the Lord,' without even the Law and the Prophets, 'if haply they might feel after Him and find Him.' But, in accord with the wonderful History which teaches us how men, even with that Word, kept losing their way, all this History shows us how Philosophy utterly failed to 'find Him.' (All is of that lesson of generations and of ages which brings us up to the Advent,—the great lesson of human weakness and perversity, and of Divine Power and Grace.)

Thus the Greek people, and especially the Athenians, who are far too much taken by us to represent all Greeks in this, were without doubt considerably affected in their religious thoughts by the speculations and discussions of the philosophers, yet did not cease to be superstitious polytheists and idolaters, and very coarse and loose in all 'morals.' If anything, they grew worse in this last. The philosophers were in general no better than the rest in either respect. In fact the doubt and disparagement, the ridicule and contempt of the actual religion, bad as it was, without substituting anything better, tended rather to make all men more boldly sensual and selfish.

As for the Persians and kindred people, the struggle noted before between the purer Magian religion (so far as we can so deem it) and the gross idolatries of Babylonia,—in the North and West of Europe, and among the distant more barbarous nations of Africa, North Asia, America, and the Islands, so far as we know, the superstitious, false religions passed down from generation to generation, or grew worse with time. We have some remains of the Etruscans in Italy, and allusions in later Roman writers to their religion, all which only denote the same gloomy and superstitious worship of many false 'gods' and of images. Any fair mind giving its attention to such details of this as we can well make out, sees the same traces of primitive truth and of the 'vain imaginations' of the wandering away of lost mankind, guilty and bewildered, as we have noted in all other Pagans.

The Roman people, as in this period they begin their remarkable history, inherit this same Italian variety of false religion, with a local variation. Numa appears among them as a Priest-king, and seems (see Plutarch's *Life of Numa*) to have had much more true thoughts of God and His worship, and with all his authority and influence, to have excluded idolatry. But this did not long outlive him, and by the close of this period the Roman religion was as senseless and superstitious as that of the Greeks.

Some suppose Numa's superior thoughts to have been learned from Pythagoras, a famous Greek philosopher, who had brought back such ideas from India or Persia, where he travelled, and afterwards made his residence in Southern Italy, and had many followers. Yet with some such spiritual thoughts he mixed the absurd Hindu notion of the transmigration of human souls through the bodies of beasts and the like.

In the end, the Romans, from much intercourse with the Greeks, borrowed their mythology as well as arts, mingling it with their own superstitions and adopting the Greek 'gods' as theirs, confusing both names and characters of these with their own older divinities. It may be observed that in the Roman religion there was much more law and less poetry than in that of the Greeks. Thus, according to the different characteristics of the two races, the virtues of civil order and of private purity and justice survived much more with the Romans, while art, eloquence, and imagination were less fertile.

This also is probably the very period of the appearance of Zoroaster (*Zerdushta*), and his writing the *Zend-Avesta*,<sup>1</sup> to which reference has been made before. It is very unlikely, however, that this would have had much effect with that people, but that some of the vigorous Persian kings espoused that party earnestly, and used all their authority to repress the opposing tendencies. Anyway the *Zend* is a most interesting document as to the history of Religion, much more so than the Indian Vedas, whether we notice its effect upon the religion of the Persians then and afterwards, or as proof

<sup>1</sup> This is by no means meant to contradict the suggestion of learned scholars that parts of the *Zend* are of later composition, and by various hands.

of the survival of primitive truth from the Patriarchs. The references in it to the Creation and Flood, to circumcision and the distinction of clean and unclean beasts, are so striking that some learned scholars of the eighteenth century were sure that these were got by the writer from the Book of Moses (much as Mohammed's Koran is an evident patchwork from the Holy Scriptures with his own 'blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits'). This is a far less probable conjecture than that these things are disfigured remnants of true traditions from the days of Noah.

If there was also, as Professor Rawlinson thinks, among these various false religions of that region, one of the worship of 'the four elements,' especially of fire, beginning in Armenia to the north-west, and led by priests called *Magi*, it must by this time have combined with that of the Persians and Medes. Thenceforth the Magi with their fire-altars and exercises (from which we have the word *magician*), were the priesthood of all that powerful race (and this very religion survives in our day among the Parsees of India). The struggle between the purer Magian religion (as much as we can so describe it) and the gross idolatries of Babylonia, continued as before noted (see p. 478), with various vicissitudes, the former being at times aided by the rise of conquering power on the part of the Medes and Persians. Yet the partial truth in it was continually obscured by a mixture of those superstitions of the worship of many absurd 'gods,' and the quite splendid but foolish and indecent ceremonies of the Assyrian and Babylonish people. We shall see this as to Cyrus and Darius in their dealings with the captive Jews at Babylon, when those kings succeeded as masters of the Jews by the conquest of Babylonia.

The Chinese Confucius (*Kung-fu-tse*), who flourished toward the end of this period, is generally allowed a like conspicuous place in the history of Religion for his countrymen. Yet he was by no means an inventor of a new Religion or reformer of the old. The authority of his writings among the educated Chinese ever since, and in our day, is not founded upon any such things. He seems to be the one of all their ancient writers who best sat down, and transmitted the traditions of the past as to industry, order,

and family virtues. The slight tissue of religion with which this is interwoven is scarcely anything more than each family's worship of its ancestors, an exaggeration of the exaggerated filial reverence which has taken the place of all thought of the Spiritual Creator and Lord, and upon which all other duty is supposed to be built. But most of the Chinese people were then, and have been ever since, as superstitious idolaters as any others on the earth. In fact *Lao-tse*, who appeared in China a little before Confucius, and founded a sect of superstitious rationalists which still survives, had quite as much to do with the actual religion of his country.

Of the actual religion of the Phœnicians we have a glimpse in the early part of this period—say about 900 B.C.,—in its being introduced into Israel by Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, and daughter of Eth-baal of Sidon. She was a woman of great force of will and violent passions, and quite the mistress of her wayward and wicked husband. So, among other like compliances of his, against his own better education and convictions, she induced him to allow, and then to patronise, in Israel the worship of the chief Phœnician god, *Baal*; and at last to persecute, and all but exterminate, that of the Lord God. It is certain that in the course of ten or twelve years there was not only a royal temple of Baal at Samaria, with its cruel and immoral ceremonies, but also more than a thousand of the priests (or 'prophets') of the false religion scattered through the country. The bold and self-denying Elijah was alone left to publicly maintain the true, and he usually hiding in ravines or caves, or else a fugitive from his own country among heathen nations around. In fact, we know that there was hardly the hundredth part of the Israelites but what had apostatised from the true God, and become Baalites. Thus it was not merely king, court, army, and aristocracy, who gave up their pure religion for that of Jezebel, while the people as a whole were innocent and constant,—Elijah again and again calls upon God to witness: 'the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant,' etc. (1 Kings xix. 10, 14).

Just then this Prophet appears suddenly before the king, reproaches him with all this, and demands a public trial, before all the nation, as to who is its true God. This is accorded.

A vast assembly gathers upon the slope of Mount Carmel, which looks westward over the Mediterranean, and far north to the towns of Tyre and Sidon. Hundreds of Baal-priests swarm on one side. Elijah stands alone on the other, for this test before the silent and awestruck multitude. This is to be by seeing upon which side the sacrifice offered will be kindled by fire from Heaven. The splendid and costly ceremonies of the idolaters come first, and two-thirds of the day pass without the fire from Heaven. The cries of their priests to Baal went forth incessantly from morning to noon uninterrupted. After that there was another voice at intervals, of scorn and reproach. It was Elijah upbraiding them with the failure of their prayers, and this proof that Baal was no real God. We have also a glimpse of the foolish and cruel superstitions of the false religion of these 'civilised' Phœnicians, in 'that the priests cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them.' Then as the sun descends toward the sea, Elijah gathers the scattered stones of an ancient abandoned altar of the Lord (probably 'thrown down' by the recreant sons of Israel), of which modern travellers not unreasonably think that they can now find traces. On this he places his sacrifice, and drenches it with water in such a way as to destroy any chance of its being set on fire by accident or human contrivance. And so, when in a hush of great awe over all, he lifts up his voice and calls upon God for this proof, a flash of lightning does dart out of that cloudless sky and a great flame consumes the sacrifice. Israel repents, renounces Baal, and returns for a little while to the true Religion.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE JEWS—FROM THE CAPTIVITY TO THE ADVENT.

IN the next and last period—from the fall of Jerusalem to the Advent—we must soon take leave of the Divine History, even as to the Jews. Yet there is very much in all this time, as to both them and the Pagan nations around them, of profound interest for our purpose. It was like the hush of all other voices just before the greatest utterance from Heaven. Yet it was also crowded with vast events of war, politics, art, poetry, philosophy, and eloquence—‘preparing the way of the LORD.’ All this however we must state in the most brief and general way.

For the first seventy years of this period the Jewish people were in two widely separated parts, each of these in a very feeble and humiliating state. These were, first, the poor people left in the villages around the ruins of Jerusalem, living in a most frightened and needy way; and, secondly, their usual and natural leaders, both religious and secular, with their families and many others—in fact, all the flower of the sons of Israel—dwelling in and around Babylon among unfriendly masters of another religion.

And now, strange to say, for the first time, the Jews did not any of them fall to imitating the false religion of those around them and leaving their own. For many reasons, which any one can see, they were far more likely to do this than ever before. On the contrary, from this time forth they never, under the pressure of any force or allurements, practised idolatry, but avoided and abhorred it. They never again forgot the Book of the Law, so that its discovery after eighty years of loss should be a wonder. They never neglected the Priesthood or, when they had a Temple, the

order of sacrifices, or even the more minute regulations. Each *word* of 'the Law and the Prophets'—each letter and mark of punctuation—was carefully counted. This not only for making exact copies of the Holy Writings, but afterward more and more for the purpose of commenting upon them, and affecting to find mysteries and lessons far more than the plain sense declared.

Whether they were as much more religious in proportion—whether the love of God and man was in a like way the soul of their lives—is another question. But for this great change in their outward treatment of the ancient Word of God, how are we to account? Some might say, perhaps, that at last the Fall of Jerusalem and their miserable subjection to the Babylonians, Persians, etc., had thoroughly frightened them out of their old perverseness.

But things had happened to them before, as appalling, without this result. And why were not the people of *Israel* in like manner converted by their ruin and captivity? Others may say that it was the peculiar obstinacy of the Jews, which was not called out for their religion when they were prosperous, but now that it was insulted and persecuted made them the most persevering of bigots. Yet neither will this bear testing by facts.

It is a popular fallacy that the persecution of a religion *always* promotes it. More instances of the contrary fact could be shown. And the Jews had *not* been persecuted for their religion. At Babylon they were not only tolerated, but some of them became favourites of the Pagan monarchs without compromising their religion, though they still did this of their own will, as much as when they had acted otherwise.

But here is the fact, one of the wonders and true miracles of this History, that they never again fell away as a people to the worship of many 'gods,' or of images. They became even what (considering that with all this they were not proportionally good and godly) can be rightly called morose and fanatical about that, and have been so ever since. Instead of being a humble and forbearing people with others, in the recollection that they too had so much and so perversely 'gone after other gods,' they make their differ-



ence from 'the nations' an occasion of pride, scorn, and insult.

There is one way of understanding this which is reasonable. That is, to see in it the Will of Him Who had kept them as a 'peculiar people' to Him in the mystery by which He was to bring in a great Redemption of all mankind in His own good time and pleasure. One part of the complete Word of God for the instruction of all mankind was to be the History of such a people in the past. This period is a part of that lesson—that even their being at last cured of their perverse defections to false religion by great calamities, and their rigid care after this for outward ceremony and precepts, were not enough to make them really good and devout, that they would pervert even this to selfishness and pride.

Thus for some seventy years the Jews (for this now becomes the designation of that people, and is accepted by themselves), both in Judea and Babylon, were living in poverty, shame, and sorrow, and some repentance for what had brought on all this. When the victorious Medes and Persians succeeded as their masters, there was little if any change in their situation. Naturally Cyrus may have felt some kindly pity for them, as far as he took any notice of them at first, as having been victims of the hated Babylonian power. But if so, it was a very slight and ineffective feeling. Evidently he had no such sympathy for them, as being also believers in One God, as some seem to fancy. The Jews themselves did not so understand him. That indeed would have been a great danger to their firm fidelity to 'the Law and the Prophets.' But in other ways some of them grew into high favour with the Persian monarchs. Yet so had Daniel been with Nebuchadnezzar, and even with Belshazzar. But thus it came about by the influence of Esther, and then of Ezra and Nehemiah, that the Jews of Babylon were granted their great desire of re-migrating in a body to Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We have indeed now a very striking proof of how the primitive truth of the One Only God was surviving still amongst men of false religion in the language used by Pagan monarchs in several of their edicts and proclamations as recorded by Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. And we are expressly guarded from the mistake of merely attributing this, on the part of Darius, etc., to their

But the delight of this return was much impaired by some things :—to see Jerusalem again, but to find it only a ruin ; its environing walls hardly traceable ; its streets, that were once ‘ full of boys and girls playing,’ impassable from the heaps of fallen walls of the burned houses ; that most sacred Temple only the greatest of the ruins ; and their kinsmen who welcomed them home, a flock of cowering half-starved peasants !

It was indeed a great undertaking to rebuild the holy city ; enough to appal and unnerve the stoutest heart, if it were only an affair of stout-heartedness. But it was God’s work. Some of the men were His Prophets, and quite a number of others were their godly and faithful helpers. So after years of toil and care, much increased by the selfish perversity of many of the Jews themselves, it was done. It was not the joyous and beautiful city of old, nor the great Temple of the Kings. Yet it was *a* city and *a* Temple of their own ; sufficient for what remained of His purpose in the children of Israel.

There is no need of our mistaking that purpose. Was it to give us this lesson of History of a people finally cured of all false religion—holding up before other nations the entire truth about God as the One Holy and Good ; and of a spiritual Redemption of all mankind by His grace, joyfully ‘ going into all the world to proclaim this good news to every human creature ’ ; thus keeping the Old Law in its spirit of love to God and man, and so understanding the Prophets as to rejoice in a hope of yet greater revelation to come, of peace on earth and good-will to men, and of a better eternal life in Heaven ?

Evidently, not at all. Some such elevated thoughts and genuine piety, we may suppose, there always were among a very few. But a great part (much the greater part) were not penitent nor devout nor spiritual. We see this plainly in the days of the last of the Prophets, from what he says

better religion as Persians, by the fact that Nebuchadnezzar’s language is as strong in the same way. Yet he (and] also Darius, Cyrus, and Ahasuerus) really believed in the gross idolatry of his people, and practised it. Still, with astonishing, unconscious inconsistency, they are wise enough at times to think of ONE Who is Sole Ruler of Heaven and Earth, the ‘ Jehovah, God of Israel ’ (He is the God). (Ezra i. 3, also vi. 7-12, vii. 12-26 ; Daniel ii. 47, iii. 28, 29, v. 2, 3, 32-37, vi. 25-28.)

(Malachi, *passim*). We find it at the end of the 400 years that followed, in the most perfect of all histories. As noted before, there was no longer any idolatry. But the people in general, and those in one way the most religious, to whom the rest looked for examples, while they adhered more carefully than ever before to the ceremonial rules, and took great care of the Holy Writings, giving much reverence to the copies they already had, and taking great pains to make other exact copies, were as much without the spirit of that Religion as the Pagans. (Some indeed were only kept from joining in all the forbidden things of the idolaters around by the national fashion, and by fear of the fanaticism of their countrymen—as appeared plain when these restraints seemed removed at some times in the period of the Maccabees, or of the Roman conquest afterwards.)

This selfish pride and hollow worldliness worked its natural result in making them 'omit the weightier matters of the Law,—judgment, mercy, and faith.' It also set the priests and other students of the Holy Writings upon a perversion of them, in order to display their ingenuity, and for other selfish purposes. This was the real beginning of the 'Rabbinical' writings, though there is good reason to think that actual *writing* was at this time still confined, according to primary custom, to the Word of God, and that these rules of the 'scribes' passed down to other generations by mere oral tradition, yet with great care, and as of high authority. (Thus Our Lord often appealed from what the scribes 'say' to what 'is written.') They thus accumulated a great mass of fabulous, absurd, and superstitious stories, and of arbitrary rules, by which, they said, the letter of the Law must be understood, but most of which were utterly misleading, or even contradictory, of the plain meaning of that Law. By the time of the Advent these had become the chief authority in the Jewish religion, as we must now distinguish that from the true, as surviving in the world, whether from primitive tradition or in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

The writers of the Old Testament ceased about 400 B.C., with Malachi, one of the most brief yet most powerful and eloquent of the Prophets, though it has been a strange fashion of late commentators, merely repeating a very careless saying of Lowth, to disparage him as 'prosaic,' and his style and

diction as 'showing the decline and corruption of the Hebrew language.' It is a very solemn and wonderful fact of this history, that there was now such a silence for 400 years until the Lord came. And this, too, is utterly against the notion of God's Word being a 'development.' Four hundred years of such silence! It is as long as from Solomon to Josiah; from the English Plantagenets to our day! This, not merely that there was no living Prophet, and no addition to the Sacred Writing *during* all that period, but that there is no Divine History *of* all that period. This fact says, in effect, that from the time Malachi wrote his last word, until the Angel appeared to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the doings of that people are no part of such a history of the people of God as He means to teach all mankind by His Word.

There are indeed certain writings of those times which some would place in the Holy Book. But the Jews themselves have never so recognised them. And this, with the fact that when this question of fact came before our forefathers of the English race and Church for a careful and final decision, they also so adjudged it. If we try these writings (commonly called the *Apocrypha*) by the test of a comparison with the undoubted Scriptures, they are of quite an inferior strain of thought in general; and, though some of them have fine passages, are all in the manner of those Rabbinical writings which no one thinks of calling Divine. They seem of various dates and uncertain authorship; perhaps composed in Babylon by some of the Jewish residents there after the Return from Captivity; or at Alexandria in Egypt, where a very large colony of Jews gathered by degrees.

The most noted Jewish book, however, which appeared at Alexandria, was not an original composition, but a translation of the Law and the Prophets into Greek, now known as the *Septuagint* or *LXX*. This was a great event in the history of Religion. It made that of the Hebrews known to all other peoples around the Mediterranean as nothing else could. For some Greek scholars began at once to turn their attention to this curious faith and ritual, and some philosophers to compare it with the speculations of Plato as they had never before been able to do.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### OTHER RELIGIONS—500 B.C. TO A.D.

THIS of itself should remind us that, even as to the Jews alone, we could not understand the history of Religion at this period without considering what had been going on of the kind among the great nations around them for these four or five hundred years. But even more, this now requires our attention for its own sake.

The conquering nations, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, who had now in turn held control of the most important regions of the world, had been making no great change in their religions, certainly not by way of returning to primitive truth, or ascending to anything better than before as to either worship or conduct. But the fact of these three nations in succession becoming masters of all around them, would be sure to have some effect upon the actual religion of both subjects and masters. As we have seen, the Persian religion never gained upon the vassal Jews, either at Babylon, or when they were again in their remote and poor home of Judea, where, however, they were also always in sight of the fact that they were the absolute subjects of these 'Gentiles.' The Persian authority was entirely content to receive their tribute and submission, without disturbing them in their religion. Cyrus and Darius even helped them in a pitying way toward the expenses of their return and the rebuilding of the Temple. This indifference and indulgence may have been helped by noticing that they, too, were not given to the idolatrous worship of many gods; but it went no further. There do appear in their chronicles traces of a fierce struggle between the Magian and the Babylonian priesthoods, for the control of the religion of the Persian Empire, and of one or more of

those monarchs taking the part of the former with all his authority.<sup>1</sup> Yet the tendency upon the whole was to the prevalence of polytheism and idolatry, as was the result at last.

There do appear in the Jewish writers of this period traces of the Magian superstitions as to demons, magic, etc., as well as of some notions of the Hindu philosophy. These both may have been learned in Babylon. Nothing, however, was added to their religion as they professed it. Yet some writers would have us believe that all ideas of evil angels, or of good ones, and of a future life and judgment, were first learned by them from the Oriental pagans and during the Captivity. From this source, forsooth, came to the Prophets of God and to all His people, their most spiritual ideas, which Our Lord, the Light of the world, approved and adopted as His teaching too!

When, 200 years later, the wonderful Alexander of Macedon carried the Greek arms, laws, arts, and language over the East, Judea, of course, fell under this new sovereignty. The city which he founded in Egypt, and gave it his own name, also became, under some of his successors, the home of a multitude of Jews. And then, as we have just seen, 'the Law and the Prophets' became also a Greek book.

And so, too, for what may be called the literary people on both sides, the Greek mind did largely affect the Jewish. The philosophy of the Greeks had now attained its highest development in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others, and fascinated some of the Jews who lived abroad, as it always has, minds of that turn in every people that have become acquainted with it. Some of the Rabbis mixed this, as well as the magical Persian, and the intensely metaphysical, yet fanciful, Indian notions, with their own speculations and doctrines. Philo of Alexandria is a notable instance of this. He in substance makes a paraphrase of the Book of Moses for the 'Gentile' philosophers, to vindicate its truth as to the beginning of the world and the history of his own people, yet

<sup>1</sup> See Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, iii., chap. vii., etc. I venture to think that this learned historian has not quite understood the obscure question as to the various religions of the Persian Empire, from not sufficiently considering the survival of primitive tradition. I can only state this result of my own study of all the facts, and remit, to another occasion, the argument.

often twisting its plain sense, in an allegorical way, to agree with the Greek notions. How all this reappeared and developed further in a later age, either in philosophical rivalry of the Gospel, or in the attempt of some Christian writers to state its truth in that way, it does not belong to our present purpose to relate; yet it would be very valuable as a suggestion of the process going on before and at the Advent.

One plain effect of Philosophy among the Jews was the arising among them of the sect of the *Sadducees*, who, in fact, gained over the richest of the people and the very High-priesthood. Their principle in matters of religion was to question and argue, rather than to believe. This, while very rightly applied in opposition to those human precepts and traditions with which the Pharisees on the other hand were overlaying the truth of God's Word, was utterly wrong in its application to that Word, or to *so construing it* as to deny the spiritual and supernatural meaning, and put other constructions upon its plain words. This the Sadducees did afterwards in opposition to Our Lord, by denying that there is either angel or spirit, or any resurrection from the dead, and judgment, and life to come. So also among all the nations to whom now the Greek was the intellectual language, among the reading and thinking people, as well of Syria, Egypt, and Italy, as of Greece proper. While disputing with one another in schools and sects—or as partisans of this or that great man of the past—about the beginnings of all things, including law, morals, and human beliefs, as well as about the 'gods' (or in a vague way 'God,' as the real supreme, if not *only*, Deity and power), they all agreed in regarding the actual religion of their own people in ceremonies and beliefs as to the Divine, with doubt, and with something of scorn; yet *practising* it, not altogether in pretence, nor merely from fear of the fanatical hatred of the religious multitude. And that multitude, the poor and ignorant, the unthinking believers of whatever their forefathers had believed, and all the women and children: these were as inconsistent in their way, in being affected somewhat by the scornful doubts of the philosophers as to the Divine persons and justice.

Some modern writers assume the sayings in the later

Greek poets about *Zeus* or *Jupiter* as the one all-powerful to be a purely intellectual growth in this period toward the idea of the One God. Yet, to say nothing of the arguments and quotations of some of the early Christians from Orpheus and 'the Sibyl,' Homer and Hesiod have the same expressions. It is but reasonable to think that all this is compounded of two elements: first, a faint survival of the primitive religion of this Unity; and secondly, in the later writers, the penetration among them obscurely of the wonderful Hebrew doctrine, and the need of something in their own religion to apply it to. But this so-called 'father of gods and men,' in that religion for ages, in all that was taught and thought of him, had been known as the child of yet earlier gods, as the most parricidal of sons,—often very weak as against either force or undue influence,—a most flagrant and frequent instance of what is filthy and mean in a man, and, so far, less worthy of respect than many of his human worshippers. So that to identify him with the Holy One Who inhabits eternity is itself a shocking absurdity. The early Christian writers never excepted this one from the crowd of false gods, as being really the One True; but are perhaps more severe in holding up his exploits to abhorrence and derision, than as to any of the others.

When the Romans in turn dispossessed the Greeks of their supremacy,<sup>1</sup> after it had endured some 200 years, and founded an even larger and stronger empire of all the Mediterranean countries: north and south, from the North Sea to the Desert of Sahara: and east and west, from the Euphrates to the Atlantic coasts,—they carried with them their own law and direct administration over the subject countries, much more thoroughly than any other like conquerors had done before them. And thus this vast machine did not fall to pieces in one, two, or three centuries by its own weight and want of cohesion of so many diverse parts, as all the others had, but lasted, in the main, at least twice as long as any one of the others.

<sup>1</sup> Which of course includes the Syrian and Egyptian monarchies as parts of the great Greek Empire which Alexander alone held under one sovereignty, and whose rivalries and contentions caused the first interference with the Temple worship at Jerusalem, and gave the Jews their opportunity of temporary independence.



But on the other hand, as to Philosophy and Art, the Romans became really subject to the Greeks about in degree as they had prevailed over them in arms and government. This changed their language a great deal, and even their religion. For while they had for ages worshipped much the same 'gods' as the Greeks, and with resembling ceremonies, still there were very considerable differences even of the names of the supposed divinities. These differences now disappeared, in a great degree, by the general adoption throughout the cities of the Roman Empire, of many of the Greek names and rites.

And with this also came the influence of Greek Philosophy in causing just such a spirit of scornful doubt as to the truth of their traditions of religion, in various degrees through all ranks of men. There were even some 'theoretic Atheists' (that is, who came to the conclusion by argument that in fact there was no such thing as a Divine person) among the most eminent Romans, as well as Greeks, the great Julius Cæsar being one, as well as the elegant poet Lucretius. Yet with all this, so deep-seated was the sense of truth and reality in the belief of a Person above mankind, who ought to be worshipped and obeyed by them, that it was always unsafe to assail this belief directly; and storms of murderous rage would sometimes break out in large communities or whole nations against those who were accused of being enemies of Religion. The elegantly fashionable unbelief of that time is commonly supposed to have found utterance in the famous saying of Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea, 'What is truth?' and, as some think, in the satirical exclamation of Agrippa, 'Almost thou persuadest *me* to be a Christian.' On the other hand, we have in Cicero, the greatest of Roman orators and philosophical writers, the struggle of one deep-thinking mind to hold fast the great truth of the Divine, though the actual religion revolted him by its absurdities.

These Romans were absolute lords in Palestine at the time of the Advent. The Greek language and literature were also there, with considerable influence upon thought. The Jews indeed were not Pagans, either sceptical or sincere. They abhorred idolatry and idolaters more than ever, and were, among themselves, exceedingly proud of their sole

exemption from that monstrous folly and sin. They even applied to their long-cherished hope of before long turning the tables upon their all-powerful masters who served these false gods,—the very mighty and splendid promises of future great glory to Zion and Israel, which they read in the Prophets. They understood these to foretell that very soon they, under a wonderful hero and prince of the old line of David, would set their feet with him upon the necks of all the heathen, and that his dominion would have no end. But they were so far from really being the true representatives of true Religion, that the Lord described them as a whole, by thus quoting of them this fearful sentence of one of the Prophets: 'Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain (*i.e.* unreally) do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' (St. Matt. xv. 8, 9). That it is the natural sense of this passage to apply it to the *general* state of Religion among the Jews then is plain, not only from the invariable force in Holy Scripture of the phrase 'this people' (not 'these men'), but also from the fact, that *as a people* they did in that generation reject, blaspheme, and even put to death, the glorious and blessed Messiah; not only denying the Prophecies in their real and spiritual fulfilment, but also when they had been attested before their eyes by His great miracles and greater life of holiness and love.<sup>1</sup>

For all the vast world of mankind that lay outside of this *οἰκουμένη* (or *inhabited world* of the New Testament—virtually the Roman Empire), we have no reason to think that any real change of religion had occurred within these last five centuries, unless it was the introduction of Buddhism into China, as also into Japan, in the following age. But that was only a new shape of vicious superstition—so all fair observers now testify—as, for instance, from thorough

<sup>1</sup> Even when a new generation had grown up after that Rejection, St. Paul, who, with all the ardour of a countryman and kinsman, had persisted in the hope that, *as a people*, they would yet believe in their Lord, and felt as if he would be willing to lose that hope of salvation if he could thus bring them to it, at the close of his life takes up those words again as God's Prophet, and repeats them to the Jews of his day (Acts xxviii. 25-28).

acquaintance with the facts, Bishop Schereschewsky and Professor Monier Williams. Everywhere, spread over all the Continents from Atlantic to Pacific Seas, and the islands of those Oceans, lay one darkness of miserable false religion.

It was now 'the fulness of time' for the Word of God in Person giving to mankind more and even much greater Holy Scripture, and setting up a more holy people, gathered out of all nations alike, to bring in the true Religion and Salvation for all men in all perfection. Amen!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### REVIEW OF THIS INQUIRY, AND ITS RESULTS.

WE have now arrived again at that great fixed point in History with which we both began and ended this inquiry. It has been a long and complicated research, ranging over vast tracts of time and of territory, and with some large and yet necessary digressions from the history, strictly considered. It is well then to make a rapid re-survey of all this, and a summary of its just results. First, we chose the Advent of Jesus Christ the Lord as that certain epoch with which we were in unbroken historical connection. Beginning thus safely this side of the region of fiction and myth, in which certainly lie the beginnings of much of the actual religion of mankind, we undertook to trace all these backward, to see if any of them gave a possible clue to the origin of all religious thought. Only one such bore the test, all the others disappearing in a mist of fable and disconnected fancies. All the historical clues, however, the further they could be traced back, agreed that Religion was not any men's discovery or invention, but was revealed to them by the Divine they worshipped.

The Hebrew tradition, as contained in much the most ancient of writings, did profess to guide us far back of all other history in a clear, interesting, and dignified account of the Religion of one people, until this brought us to their origin as descendants of one man. Even there it claimed to conduct us, by a revelation of God, back to the very first of our race, and the creation of all things, visible and invisible. This, as fact, has indeed, by some men of note, been rejected with scorn. But, on the other hand, it has in all ages since, and does now, command the respect and the reverent faith of a vast number of the most intelligent and candid.

Altogether, it was quite worth our while to make the *experiment* of trying it as a hypothesis, to see, as is done in other investigation, how, supposing it to be true, it will, accord with, or fail to account for, other facts of the history of man. Thus, reversing the first process, we began to descend the stream we had so rapidly explored in ascent. But now the exploration must be made more carefully, and in detail. Every other current which joins our little rill must then be ascended as far as possible, to see what claims it may have to be the main stream.

As a part of this process there needed some scrutiny of the theory of 'Natural Religion.' This was done, with the clear result of showing that this theory is contrary to the substance of Christian faith, and against the facts of History. It is therefore set aside as a cumbersome fiction, only obstructing the work before us.

But we cannot well yet enter upon that, without first settling distinctly the authority of the Holy Scriptures, as to both facts and principles, and the true method of their use by Christians, in such an investigation as we were about to begin. This was done with care, and its results, to which I again invite special attention, as briefly summed up on p. 99, were of the greatest importance to our present inquiry. For it will be seen that, by neglect, or mistaking of these principles, many false notions have been carelessly allowed, as to the history of Religion, by those who wish to be among the more enlightened Christians of the age.

With this preparation we then began to trace the history of mankind from the Genesis. By this we learned that they began with one man and woman as the pattern of all subsequent marriage, innocent, and made according to the very Divine words, 'in the image and likeness of God.' To understand these wonderful words, we go at once to Our Lord in the Gospel, Himself the only pattern since of such complete human nature, and the restorer of it—as well as the complete Word of God,—to us all. From Him we learn that the purpose of man's existence, and his nature, in the highest sense, is TO LOVE; first, above and including all else, to love God, with all his heart, his mind, his strength; and secondly, to love his fellow-men as himself. This, then,

by the purpose and nature of mankind, is the highest conceivable, the only true Religion, for them. They are by this nature and purpose first, and above all, religious. If that had been omitted from the life of Adam and Eve they would not have been human. If it had been delayed for a while,—only the human body, mind, and such life as there may be with these,—this would not have been man as God did make him, in His Own image, for 'GOD IS LOVE.'

This Religion involved an instant personal knowledge of God, and immediate great love of Him, including reverence of One so great and glorious, adoration, joyful obedience to all His commands, faith and hope in all He revealed as to their safety and happiness now, and eternal life afterwards. But for all this, information from Him about Himself and them, as to their nature and destiny, was indispensable. So also was the power of spiritual thought and speech (in themselves inseparable), that they might use words of worship to Him, and of love to one another.

This we found expressly made known to us in the Genesis as a fact. It was well, however, to turn aside from pursuing that narrative further, until we might meet the question which has been raised by some against this being fact, and not rather 'allegory,' according to certain theories of the origin of human speech, particularly as maintained by Professors Max Müller and Whitney. And this also naturally involved the question of the survival of the primitive language, or of any fragments of it, especially those greatest of its words which denoted God and man, and the chief relations and duties of the latter. In the same way, some inquiry into the peculiarities of the Hebrew language, as giving us the only history of the first ages, and its study that we might best understand that history, was necessary to our purpose.

Then, for man to be thus freely and responsibly religious, implied that he *might* choose to be otherwise. The test of this was the simplest act of obedience, only requiring the self-denial of a momentary bodily pleasure, and the subjection of curiosity—that is, the desire of knowing more about this—to the loving will of God.

Before this test they fell. The primitive Religion of a

perfect love and innocence was gone. But the pitying mercy of God had provided a great Redemption from this, through the Son and Word of God taking the nature of mankind upon Him, and among them, after some hundred increasing generations of such souls; and, in the meantime, conducting these generations through a mystery of preparation for this, which we have in the Old Testament.

Beginning then with true Religion after the loss of innocence, we trace it down through the swiftly multiplying generations for 1600 years to the Flood. It is a religion of penitence for sins, and faith in God's mystery of mercy to sinners—with sacrifices celebrating that, and offering adoration to Him—with a constant struggle of the self-denial of all evil passions and worldly selfishness, in order to keep God's two great laws of love. This on the part of a decreasing few, though some of these (notably Enoch) rose to a height of such love, unsurpassed, if equalled, among men afterwards, until 'the last Adam' appeared.

On the other hand, with the fall from perfect love began, with the greater number of men, not so much false religions as utter irreligion. (It was more like what is so threatening now in some so-called Christian nations, than among barbarous idolaters.) It was the fierce struggle with one another of ungodly, unloving, selfish, passionate men—armed still with all the fresh physical powers and sharp intelligence of their first Creation, and not self-restrained by any thought of God—endeavouring to forget Him as any restraint, either by love or fear, upon their ambitions.

This began with the first-born of men murdering his innocent brother. And this period of the mystery of Redemption ended with God proclaiming, at the end of ten such very long generations, that since, of the now great multitude of mankind, there was only one religious family left—only one of which it must not be said that 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,'—therefore by the miracle of a vast flood, He would destroy from the earth all but that religious family of Noah.

With this began a new epoch in the ages before Redemption, in which we can only discover the true Religion con-

tinuing in very few of the many families into which Noah's household rapidly multiplied. The other branches, migrating over the vacant world, and growing into nations, set up various false religions. This dispersion begins most energetically at Babel in Mesopotamia, after a demonstration of worldly self-conceit by many families among the adherents of false religion assembled there, which is thwarted by the sudden development among them of different languages. And this is the only clue we really have to the present varieties of human speech.

Some centuries later, we find the true Religion scarcely surviving in a few scattered households of the East. Then to one of those masters of families, Abraham, a man of very unusual faith in the Unseen God, it was committed by Him, to preserve this from utter extinction. To him, as a Prophet, now comes the Word of God to mankind; and the ceremony of circumcision is appointed as the sacrament of admission into this first calling out (*ecclesia*) of believers in God from the rest of mankind.

Then we also collected all extant proofs of what were at that time the various false religions, and the causes and process of this great defection from the True; observing, however, that always were left in these some traces of that primitive truth, and that even a few scattered families and small tribes of Syria and Arabia may still have adhered to it in the main. Yet probably all these were in the way of disappearing in a few generations in the general apostasy.

For this inquiry, and from this time on, we found great beacon-lights of the New Testament illuminating all our way,—as to the true Religion, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter xi., and as to the many false, in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter i. 18-22.

Then, returning to the only real history we have yet, we followed the Patriarchs, from Abraham to Joseph, in their simple and spiritual religion, in contrast with that of the idolatrous and vicious tribes of Canaan, and the rich and magnificent, yet equally silly and immoral, false religion of Egypt. In like manner we learned of how the descendants of Jacob, increasing to a great multitude in Egypt, after the death of Joseph, still maintained, though imperfectly, the



worship and faith of the Only and True God, and kept the sacred traditions of that history from Abraham, Noah, Enoch, and Adam.

There comes a great epoch in this history, in the Word of God coming to them by Moses, their Exodus from Egypt and across Arabia to Canaan under his leading, and the giving of the Law to them at Sinai. This required also a careful inquiry into the origin of *written* language, and the character and substance of the Book of Moses, especially of the Ten Commandments. From this also it was made plain that the Word of God has no such method of 'Development' or 'Evolution' as modern theories have assumed and described—that there was even rather a contraction of the primitive truth of Religion in the history from Adam, Abraham, and Moses.

Going back then (Chapter XVI.) to the scrutiny of all proofs as to other religions at this time (say 1800 to 1500 B.C.), we find the same want of real history everywhere, except with the Hebrews, but evidently the same process of variation and deterioration from the primitive truth.

So, returning to the Divine story of Israel, we followed the history of true Religion as now in sole charge of that 'people of God' through some 500 years of 'theocracy' from Moses to Samuel, and the beginning of the Hebrew monarchy. This included the conquest of Canaan from its superstitious and immoral native tribes, and the establishment there of the *nation* Israel, the semi-patriarchal state of twelve distinct tribes, yet one commonwealth, bound together above all by a spiritual and majestic religion, and occasionally rescued from great disasters and defections from that truth by Prophets of God, 'Judges,' and heroes whom He caused to appear for them. All this was an example of what men can do at the best, even with considerable supernatural help, in the way of maintaining real piety and goodness against the downward tendency in general, perversity in themselves, and the bad example of all other peoples around them.

Turning from them to learn how those Pagan nations fared in their ways, we see for this period, all over the world, the same gloomy waste of false gods, superstitions, incon-

sistencies, absurdities, and bad morals, through which still faintly gleams some of the ancient truth about Divine power, God's commands of duty, man's sins, and a future judgment and life. The first traces of real History outside of the Hebrew Scriptures also now begin to appear ; but all it can tell us is to the same effect. The monuments and hieroglyphics of Egypt have already been allowed their use in the research, as well as what could be fairly allowed to like remains in Assyria, Persia, India, and China, and the legends of more barbarous nations.

Proceeding to the next age of Israel, say from David to Daniel, from the building of the first Temple to its destruction, we see 'the people of God' under the more firm and strong government of monarchs ; at first powerful and prosperous among their neighbour nations far and near. The Temple at Jerusalem is famous upon the banks of Nile and Euphrates ; and the thought of only One, True, Unseen God, to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth, not by any image or visible object of reverence, and Who requires goodness and purity in all this worship and in private life, this doubtless penetrated in some measure to all those lands, as we know it did to Sheba (in South Arabia). When, on the other hand, the false religion began to creep into the Holy Land, Israel was divided into two jealous and quarrelling nations, and even in Judah with the Holy City and Temple, there were oftener bad kings and a like people than otherwise.

Then we have new Prophets appearing with more of the Word of God, and adding to its Scriptures these later writings called by their names. Yet, as in these was no contradiction of 'the Law,' but rather its fulfilment and enforcement, so also, as we have seen in the previous history, was there no advancing development in Religion. That *began* with the greatest light and truth by the Word of God, which, being much obscured by the Fall of man, was hardly kept from utter extinction on the earth by the prophets of God, even then at times suffering rather diminution than increase.

The same age among the Pagan nations saw the same darkness of perversion of that truth as before. Yet now we

begin to find materials for history among them. And especially we note the appearance of certain men as philosophers, reformers, or, as some of them claimed, prophets of religion by Divine inspiration; as Zoroaster and other writers of the Zend among the Persians, and the authors of the Vedas in India. Excepting with the Persians, among whom the primitive truth survived more evidently, the actual religion of only a very few was at all affected by such influences. Superstitious and vicious idolatry occupied the religious thought of almost all the men, women, and children of those lands, and was generally *practised* by the philosophers themselves. Whence then these men got the more true and spiritual things they *said* (with a great deal else which was inconsistent with that, and misleading) can only be conjectured. But we have had occasion to see that far the most reasonable conjecture is, that it was not from original thought of their own, but the survival of primitive truth, and, in some cases at least, from the religion of Israel coming to their knowledge, either in its Holy Writings or by personal intercourse of traders and travellers, and recalling that truth to their attention. A great illustration of this, and of the mercy and pity of God for all these 'Gentiles,' we saw in the mission of Jonah to Nineveh, and also in the episodes of the Queen of Sheba and of Naaman the Syrian.

For the last period—from the Captivity of Babylon to the Advent,—the Jews, though even fanatically monotheistic, so far from advancing in spiritual piety, and devoting themselves to spread the truth of Religion among all other men, grew more formal, hypocritical, and bitter as a people. Instead of falling away to Syrian, Greek, or Roman idolatry, they fought furiously, and against any odds—often victoriously,—to expel their Pagan masters, and to prevent sacrilegious interference with the Temple at Jerusalem and its rites. Early in this period the last of the Prophets brought the Word of God to them, with warnings against their hypocrisies. Then for the 400 years until the Advent no Prophet appeared. The ancient Scriptures were carefully preserved, and treated in profession and form with an almost superstitious reverence. But their real meaning for spiritual good was obscured by the pretended discovery of other

meanings than that in the plain words, and by false traditions to the same effect. Much of this may have been derived from, doubtless was suggested by, the fictions of the Persian Magi and the Hindu poetry and philosophy with which some of their 'scribes' became acquainted in Babylon during the Captivity, and where one of their chief 'schools' was afterwards.

Thus at the Christian Era we find the Jews still in the Holy Land as a people, yet many of them scattered as trading adventurers in all the large towns from Persia to Spain: a large colony of them at Alexandria, and even a considerable one at Rome. Everywhere they are exclusive in their religion, rigid in the ceremonies of the Law of Moses and many other observances which have no authority from it,—often at the services of the Temple, if near enough to Jerusalem for that, or in attendance every Sabbath at places of worship called synagogues, when the Holy Scriptures were read aloud,—yet having almost as little of the true meaning of this Religion as the Pagans. Scattered among them were a very few devout penitents before God, looking and longing for the great Messiah whom God had promised 'by the mouth of His holy Prophets, which had been since the world began.' These promises were indeed much talked of by their worldly and selfish countrymen, but only for their glory as Jews and the subjugation of all other nations to them. One great fact of this period especially connected their religious history with that of the other nations—the translation of their Scriptures into Greek, made about 200 years before the Advent of Our Lord.

Finally, reviewing this period as to Religion in the rest of the world, we found the same general condition as before. No growing civilisation nor genius of a few extraordinary men had lifted the black cloud of false religion which hung over almost all mankind. Rather this was settling down from bad to worse. Any such necessary 'development' and improvement of this as some now imagine was really greater degeneracy. Buddha in India, estimated at the most favourable we reasonably can, leaves his countrymen, and his converts elsewhere, at least as superstitious and immoral as he found them. The Persian religion is now only another sort

of these religious follies,—of sun- and fire-worship and cruel sorceries,—while its purer traditions have lost all meaning. The Greek philosophers and their Roman successors have written elegantly, and given out some fine sentences, without even making themselves spiritually religious; while their countrymen are only more superstitious than ever, though mocking doubts as to there being anything Divine weaken all restraints upon vice in high and low alike.

Is not this a fair account of the state of Religion in the world when Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem in Judea? How this came about we have now carefully investigated by the only possible historical clue from the first down, if any is possible,—that is, by the Hebrew Scriptures, according to the Christian view of them as a part of the Word of God to us in Jesus Christ Our Lord. No other history pretends to begin so early or to maintain this sequence, or to be the truth without any possible mixture of error. Scientific theories have to plunge into the regions of absurd myth and of contradictory fictions, and by some guesses at thought and language make it as plausible as possible that thus or thus it *might* have been. Yet not even in that very imperfect way can any of them adjust themselves to many of the facts.

But here is history that traverses the whole range of fact with a clear eye and firm step, and shows how the most reasonable solution of all the questions of other traditions, records, and religions is in accordance with it.

This for all the candid who were willing in this way with me to try 'the Christian hypothesis.' It is unanswerable. It is irresistible. But it is far below the Christian's ambition to have set up an unanswerable argument. This truth is not his. It is from God. It is His gift of grace and love to all mankind. My hope is that we may all accept it by that faith in Him which is the highest exercise of our intelligence and love of truth.



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